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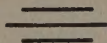
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THESSALONIANS GLORIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST

BY
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Professor of Sacred History and Theology, Author of
"Life of Christ," and "Acts of the Apostles"; "The
Bible Outline," "The Bible Geography," "The
Old Testament History," "The New
Testament History," "Analysis of
the Books of the Bible."

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman
that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word
of truth."



1923
BIBLE STUDENTS' LEAGUE
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SYSTEMATIC BIBLE STUDY

THE Bible Students' League was organized in 1886 and is one of the first Correspondence Schools to offer Bible instruction by mail. The work during the first years was largely experimental from the fact that text books written by different authors had to be adopted, therefore, it was difficult to offer uniform, complete, and systematic courses on the entire Bible.

After some years, the President of the League, realizing the necessity of a systematic course in the study of the sixty-six books of the Bible, prepared four text books known as The Bible Outline, The Bible Geography, The Old Testament History and The New Testament History. These text books give the student a general knowledge of the entire Bible, and are used for class work in many churches, and by Sunday-school teachers and ministers for home study. The students who have followed these books have found them loyal to the Word of God and the means of increasing faith in God and His plan for the human family.

After teaching these text books for about twelve years, many students were enrolled and completed the course, and realizing the advantages of systematic study, repeatedly asked for text books for a Second Course. Two text books were prepared for the Second Course fully in harmony with the system studied in the First Course.

The Life of Christ, or Harmony of the Four Gospels, is a book containing 348 pages. The Scripture given in the Four Gospels is arranged in chronological order. The Life of Christ is divided into nine periods. Each period is illustrated with maps, by which the student can name and locate the important events and places. These give the student a systematic knowledge of the Four Gospels

enabling him to follow Christ's journeys and name the events in chronological order from Christ's birth to His ascension. The Life of Christ is to be revised and published in two volumes giving additional comment upon each period.

The second book, Acts of the Apostles, contains 320 pages, giving the Scripture of one of the best versions, showing the full history of the Early Church and reasons why the Apostles and Early Disciples were able to make such rapid progress although bitterly opposed by the world and the Jewish Church. The book contains a number of maps on which are traced the journeys of the first missionaries and the important events are given in chronological order.

These two books, giving a knowledge of the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, have been the means of helping many Sunday-school teachers and ministers, strengthening their faith in the Word of Truth and making them more efficient workers in the church.

The Second Course was introduced in 1915 and a number have completed this course and made a demand upon us for other text books by which the same System of study could be followed. The author of the above text books has been a student and teacher of the Bible for more than thirty-five years, and decided the best and most helpful course to be offered would be text books giving a systematic knowledge of what is presented in the section of the Bible known as the letters written to the seven churches. These letters were written for definite Christian instruction. It is the part of the Bible in which Christ is the author of All-truth, the Holy Spirit the guide into All-truth, and the Apostle Paul the chosen vessel to whom this truth was revealed, who put this truth into these nine letters that man might, through faith in Christ, become justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Although the author at the beginning of his study of

these Church Epistles had the privilege of being under some of the most able teachers and constantly had the help of some of the very best commentators, he found it a task beyond his expectations to complete three text books showing fully the system presented by Christ and the Holy Spirit for Christian education in this age of grace. He does not claim, in the preparation of the manuscript for these books, entire originality, having used at times the very thought given by some of these teachers and commentators, and if their names should not be mentioned in the books, we take this method of acknowledging our indebtedness for any help received in the preparation of the manuscript.

We now in a humble way present to our students these text books: Romans as the first book, showing that all men have sinned and only by faith in Jesus Christ can they be justified; Ephesians, the second book, which admits the student into an advanced class of the School of Grace, so that through faith in Christ he becomes sanctified, dwelling with Christ in the Heavenlies, and realizes what it is to be a member of the Body of Christ; Thessalonians, the third book, written to the members of a model church who found Christ through the teaching of Romans, dwelt in a state of sanctification through the teaching of Ephesians, and were to receive instruction for glorification through faith in Jesus Christ.

The student should learn that only by confidence in the Author of Truth, Christ, and by confidence in the guide, Holy Spirit, can he receive from these text books the help and inspiration that will make him more efficient as a teacher and preacher of the Word. Those who will enter into this most important part of the Bible and be honest with themselves and the Word, will be willing to have answered and incorporated into their lives, the things asked for by the Apostle Paul in the two prayers recorded in Ephesians. (Eph. 1:17-23), "That the God of our Lord

Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Eph. 3:14-21), "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

We admonish the student to constantly remember that the evangelists and teachers who are true to Christ and His Word are limited in their mission and must perform the task assigned them as set forth in the following Scripture (Eph. 4:11-16), "And he (Christ) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."



EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

THE Apostle Paul wrote nine Epistles which he addressed to seven churches. These have been especially written for the instruction of every Christian. Every word of Scripture in these nine letters is about him and all contain a complete course of Christian education. The other Epistles written by the Apostle are addressed to individuals and not to churches, and are also meant for the Christian and for his learning, but they do not contain the truths concerning the Church of God, the Body of Christ or tell how the Jews and Gentiles are being made one Body in Christ. This presents a marked difference between the Epistles written to the churches and those written to individuals.

I. THE BIBLE A LIVING BOOK

God's Book contains special instruction for each period of the human race. The first book of the Bible contains an Outline of the entire Word of God. During the progress of the human family, God revealed Himself more fully and made plain what was contained in the first book of the Bible by adding book to book until the Word of God was complete in sixty-six books. These contain God's purposes and plans for the human family. It is the only book that God has left with the human race by which her origin, history, and destiny can be known.

II. DIVISIONS OF THE HUMAN RACE

After God created the world He made man, and gave him dominion over that which He had created. In the beginning God's government was universal and included the entire human family. Because of man's failure to

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respond to God and His Word, God called a family through which to reveal Himself as the Redeemer of the world. That family developed and became known to us as the Jewish nation. He made conditional and unconditional covenants with this nation and a very large part of the Bible is given to show the origin of this nation, her history during periods of faithfulness and unfaithfulness and her final destiny. The nation having failed in the mission entrusted to her, became a scattered nation and but a remnant, the elect of God, are worthy to be used in bringing about, through the suffering of this remnant, the Church of God. Therefore, we have three divisions in the human family: Gentiles, Jews, and the Church (1 Cor. 10:32).

III. RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

It took sixteen hundred years to write the inspired Word of God which contains special teaching for each of the three classes into which the human family is divided. The Apostle Paul, living during the period when part of this Word of Truth was revealed, understood fully how very important it is to use the teaching in the Word of God for the class to which it was written. The Apostle, who is the author of these nine letters to these seven churches, attended school and was under instructors who were either not honest or were ignorant as to the right division of the Word of God. It was by the use of literature, not in harmony with the Word of God, and by the instruction of unfaithful teachers of the Word that he himself became a bitter enemy of the truth and a persecutor of the Church. Paul met his Lord on the way to Damascus and was told by Him what he must do. He was told that he must follow God's plan and God's truth. By doing so his eyes were opened and he became one of the most faithful writers and expositors of the truth of God.

Paul is no longer a persecutor but a revealer of Christ, and as a chosen vessel, he becomes acquainted with God's

Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit is able to comprehend the Scripture given by God to the Gentiles and Jews and to write these letters to the seven churches for Christian education.

The Jewish church, ignorant of the Word of God, and not able to rightly divide it, rejected Christ as the redeemer of the world. The Jews had a system of religion of their own which was supported by their own literature. Since they were ignorant of what God had promised the nation in the different covenants, they were unprepared to receive Christ, who is so fully revealed in the Old Testament, "He came unto His own (things) and His own (people) received Him not, but as many as received Him (of the Jewish people) to them gave He power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name," (John 1:11-12). We have learned what the Jewish nation did because ignorant of the Word of Truth and not capable of rightly dividing it. The same results will follow when the last warning given by the Apostle Paul to all Bible teachers is not heeded, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." Humanity does not like what God says, but what man says.

IV. CHRIST'S VIVID PICTURE OF THIS AGE

Christ's teaching and work as Redeemer of the world was constantly opposed by the Jewish Church. The time came for the disciples as well as all His followers to have some knowledge of the progress of the Kingdom when opposed by the world and strongest religious body then on earth. Christ gave this information in seven parables (Matt. 13:1-53). These show the progress, successes and failures of the Kingdom of God in this entire age of grace. This is Christ's prophecy and he interprets the same which has been found true in every century since the parables have been spoken. They set forth man's ignorance and

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rejection of the Word, and through disobedience to the Word of God as foreseen by Christ we cannot expect the nations to turn unto Christ and progress be made toward universal salvation.

V. THE CHRISTIAN'S LITERATURE FOR THIS AGE

Christ uttered another important prophecy concerning the literature for Christian education in this age of grace (John 16: 12-14), "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: (all the truth) for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Christ uttered this prophecy and we look to Him for its fulfilment. Christ had prophesied sometime before this to His disciples, "Upon this rock I will build my church," (Matt. 16: 18). When He said this He was making preparation for His church of the future which could not be organized until after His death on Calvary, burial in the tomb, resurrection, and ascension unto the right hand of God. The church He was to build would then have a Head, Christ, the Author of Truth, sitting at the right hand of God. He told His disciples that He had much unrevealed truth that would not be revealed until He would send the Holy Spirit, the comforter who is the Guide into all truth.

1. **When, Where, and How Was This Prophecy of Christ Fulfilled?** These are the things that Christ promised would happen after the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, was come: First, He shall guide you into all the truth; Second, He shall not speak of (or from) Himself; Third, He shall show you things to come; Fourth, He shall glorify me; Fifth, He shall receive of mine and show it unto you. Jesus said to His disciples, "I am the way, the truth, and

the life," (John 14:6). There is only one way by which man may find his way home to God and that is by the way of the cross. Christ is the all-truth. It is this all-truth of Christ that the Holy Spirit is to reveal unto the churches in this age. Christ then is the only source of the all-truth capable to give instruction in the building of His church. To build the Church of God, there was need to have the Gospel of Grace as presented to the seven churches. The four Gospels are the completion of the Old Testament history as well as the beginning of the New. The King and the Kingdom had been prophesied and promised all through the ages. The Jews both rejected the King and the Kingdom and put the King to death. This surely is not good news. God's future judgments for the rejection and death of the King are revealed in Scripture. In the early days of the Christian Church, Christ, through the Holy Spirit and the Apostles, gave to the nation an opportunity to repent of her sins and become reconciled to God (Acts 3:18-21), however they rejected the Holy Spirit's teaching and put to death the message bearers (Acts 4:1-4, 5:17-20, 7:58, 12:1-4).

2. **The Gospel of Grace** is revealed in the Epistles to the seven churches. Christ is the author of the four Gospels given by Him while in preparation for the Church and dwelling in His physical body. He, being the all-truth and at the right hand of God, became the author of these Epistles to the Seven Churches; therefore, the Epistles and Gospels have the same person as author and are of equal weight and importance. No difference can be made between them without jeopardizing the very essence of inspiration. By making a difference in weight and authority, we reduce the Bible to the position of any man-made book and practically question the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. That there is a difference is true, but this difference can only be understood (as we have said before) by a right division of the Word of Truth. We know that the things

Christ said, while on earth, are necessarily of the highest importance to us dispensationally and show how the Jews rejected God's plan for the nation, thus opening the way for salvation to be offered to the Gentiles. The instruction given to the Jew was intended for the Jew and would be only of historical value to the Church of God, for Christ had not begun the building of His Church and the churches to whom Paul addressed the Church Epistles were not in possession even of the Four Gospels.

The things that Christ taught while on earth are of utmost importance to every Christian, and contain much valuable truth for all in this church age. However, the Four Gospels were spoken by the Lord to the nation to which He belonged, and the Scripture of the Old Testament as well as much of the New will be of great value to the Jewish nation, even after the Body of Christ has been formed and the church age closed. This is not true concerning the letters for the seven churches which contain the real Gospel of God for this age. When the Body of Christ has been formed and the church age closed, the church literature for it, found in the nine letters to the seven churches, will be only of historical value to the Jewish nation as much of the Bible is at this time to the Christian church. We cannot insist too strongly upon all Biblical students accepting the all-truth of Christ, given through the Holy Spirit, using Paul to formulate this truth in nine letters, as the special Gospel of God for this age of grace. We do not mean by this that the literature of Christ, given in the Four Gospels, should be less studied and emphasized, but that more attention by all Christian people should be given to the part of the Bible that contains the truth of Christ by which souls may be saved, trained, perfected, and glorified.

3. **The Arrangement of the Gospel of Grace** found in these nine letters for the building of the church was not given until after Christ's death, resurrection and ascen-

sion to the right hand of God. There are just seven churches addressed by the Apostle Paul in writing these nine letters. Seven is a number of spiritual perfection. Seven is the number frequently used in the Inspired Word. Christ spoke seven parables (Matt. 13:1-53) and gave seven letters to seven churches (Rev. 2:1-3:22). The names of the nine letters written to the seven churches are as follows: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians. These embody the truths of the Spirit's teaching for the churches. Christ prophesied that when the Holy Spirit was come, He would guide into all the Truth. The Holy Spirit had no truth of His own to give and, therefore, could only give what He received from another (that is from Christ). He was not only to bring this truth which was to be of special value to all who would receive Christ, but the Holy Spirit was to have the privilege of revealing new truths as an inspiration to the members of the Body of Christ. All of this is contained in the prophecies uttered by Christ concerning this church literature, as is testified and experienced by all who know and live this truth.

These nine church letters were not written in the order in which they appear in the Bible, but in almost the inverse order. Thessalonians was written first, and in the arrangement, appears last. In all the Greek manuscripts the arrangement is the same as we have in the Bible. This is not true of all the other books of the New Testament. Even these nine letters may appear in some other division of the New Testament, but the order of the nine letters is always the same. These letters themselves, as well as their order, are of Divine weight and authority. Their origin and arrangement is due to Christ's authority and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. A careful study of each of these letters will help the student to understand why they appear in the order presented. The Holy Spirit knew

which book to place first and last in order that the Christian might begin right and end right. The following classification will help us to understand the systematic order for study that right progress may be made in Christian education. If these books were studied in the inverse order, beginning with Thessalonians and ending with Romans, it would be much more disastrous than for a person to try to master geometry before learning the multiplication table. This no doubt is the cause of so much misdirected effort in the mission of the church, as many of the members of the church are ignorant of what Christ teaches. If a person is ignorant concerning this course of study supplied by Christ for those who accept Him, he must necessarily be an easy prey for every new teacher who presents some speculative philosophy of man. Christ has not only given us this literature, but has appointed teachers, evangelists and prophets to use it for the perfecting of the saints, that they might not be at the mercy of every "wind of doctrine," (Eph. 4: 14).

4. **Classification as to Subject.** For man's use the order, number, and purpose is spiritually perfect, and can be studied under three heads. First: Justification through faith in Jesus Christ—Romans, Corinthians and Galatians. Romans is the beginning book in Christian education. Jews and Gentiles are lost and need a Savior. God's wrath is revealed unto all who are dead in trespasses and sins. Adam was disobedient; through one act of disobedience sin and death came upon the whole human family. Through one act of obedience of the second Adam, Christ, even the death on the cross, many are made righteous. Through faith in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, we become justified before God. There is no condemnation or separation from Christ of those who are thus related to God. Paul's Gospel to the Romans is the A B C book in Christian education, which finds man in sin, and through faith in Christ, he stands justified before God. The Holy Spirit

closes this first text book by calling attention to the Gospel mystery (16:25-27). This mystery is taken up in the second text book (Ephesians) written for an advanced course in the school of grace.

Second: Consecration Through Faith in Jesus Christ. The Christian's salvation has been completed at the cross as presented in Romans and he is now ready for the study of the book of Ephesians. Romans gave man a picture of his sinfulness and showed how to obtain God's righteousness. The Holy Spirit in Ephesians shows God's part in salvation, that even before the foundation of the world, Christ had been called, and when He was called, those who are in Him were called. God had two great purposes; one to establish a Head and the other to establish a Body. This Body is the mystery (The Church) as revealed in the third chapter. In this advanced course we are told that our Head is dwelling in the Heavenlies, and therefore, we who are in the Head are also dwelling in the Heavenlies. This book contains the doctrinal teaching for those who are in Christ Jesus and who are dwelling in the state of sanctification. Having reached this place in Christian education, the student is ready for the last text book in the course.

Third: Glorification Through Faith in Jesus Christ: Thessalonians. This, the Apostle calls a model church. We would have many model churches at the present time if the members were trained in this course of Christian education given in Romans and Ephesians, as was this Thessalonian Church. The Thessalonian Church had heard from Paul himself, the truth he later embodied in the Roman letter and in the Ephesian letter. There has always been some opposition to this advanced spiritual teaching found in Thessalonians. This is true because persons have failed to follow the course outlined by the Holy Spirit to prepare for this truth of the church. A person may be a good student of the Old Testament, even of the Life of Christ, as presented in the Four Gospels, but ignorant of Romans

and Ephesians, and therefore not prepared to understand this advanced truth which comes only to those who know and experience the truth of Christ as found in Romans and Ephesians. In Romans we are in sin; in Thessalonians crowned. In Romans we are lost and in ruin; in Ephesians we dwell in the Heavens; and in Thessalonians we are glorified.

5. Four Text Books for an Advanced Course in Bible Study. These four text books include the important teaching, Romans: Justification Through Faith in Christ (two volumes); Ephesians: Sanctification Through Faith in Christ; Thessalonians: Glorification Through Faith in Christ. The other four letters, written by the Apostle to the churches, will not be included in this course, but will appear in book form and will be given their proper place among these nine epistles. Corinthians and Galatians follow Romans, and were written to show that these churches did not fully comprehend and practice the teaching of Romans—Justification by Faith. The Corinthian Church had failed to practice the teachings of Romans, while the Galatians had failed in the doctrinal teaching.

Paul wrote three epistles while in prison. The Ephesian letter contained in a large measure, the all-truth on Sanctification. In writing to the Philippian and Colossian churches, Paul clearly shows that those churches had not fully understood his instructions in the book of Ephesians, because the Philippian Church failed to practice this teaching and the Colossian Church failed because of not fully understanding the doctrine.

INTRODUCTION

THE Apostle Paul wrote nine letters to the seven different churches. Although First and Second Thessalonians were the first of these letters to be written, when they were put together in the Bible they did not appear first but last. The letters written to the seven churches contain the "all truth" spoken of by Jesus when He said, "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

The truth contained in these letters to the seven churches is to be used because it contains everything about us. Many other inspired books have been written by holy men, but there seems to be this difference: the truth contained in these church letters is all about us, while the truth contained in other epistles is for us but not so definitely about us. As we learn these truths and obey them through faith in Jesus Christ, we become justified, as we learn from Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians; through faith in Jesus Christ in Ephesians, Philipians, and Colossians, we become sanctified and having made some progress in our Divine life through learning these advanced lessons in the school of grace, we are permitted to dwell with Christ in the Heavenlies; then, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in these Thessalonian Epistles we become glorified.

Romans finds us as sinners; Thessalonians puts us on the throne. In Romans, though faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we die and rise with Christ and we are assured of our position in Him. In Ephesians we are in Christ our Head and Christ in us, His Body. In Thessalonians we have completed our journey and are about to receive our blessed hope—the glorification of our bodies. Romans takes up the Jew and Gentile as sinners, individually; Ephesians, collectively, made "one new

man." Romans teaches that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The sinner is invited to accept Christ as his Saviour and thus brought out of sin and death.

We can see from the lessons presented in these different Church Epistles why the Holy Spirit has put Romans first, and Thessalonians last. This is the arrangement found in the Word of God, for which we have the same authority as for the books themselves. If man had arranged them he would have, no doubt, arranged them in chronological order. It is no wonder that the individual members of the Church are ignorant concerning the truth that Jesus gives in these Church Epistles when they will not study the text books in the order presented by the Holy Spirit. In all the different Greek manuscripts the arrangement of these Church Epistles is the same as we find here in the Word of God. This is not true of all the other books of the New Testament, but it is true of the Church literature written especially for our learning in this age of grace. This then, is the arrangement for the Church, due to the influence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian has, in these seven Church Epistles, a complete course mapped out, beginning with Romans and ending with Thessalonians, and if studied under the direction of the Great Teacher, the Holy Spirit, he cannot help but receive a finished Christian education. They contain the course of study necessary for the Christian's standing and walk. The Christian may be ignorant concerning other books of the Bible without such great loss, but how can he be ignorant concerning the foundation of the Christian Church and that which is necessary concerning Him who is the Builder, the Head, and how can he understand the Christian's hope, unless he has made use of every one of these Church Epistles? The Apostle Paul says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."

We are living in the dispensation of grace. God has given us certain text books to be used during this period. In other dispensations God has truths suited for the time and when

these close, the Truth abides for information to those coming later, but it has not the same application as it has for those to whom it was given. When this dispensation closes, these text books close with the dispensation. In the coming dispensation these books will be valuable for information, but will have lost much of their value because the period has closed for which they were given.

TO WHOM ADDRESSED

These letters are addressed to the Church of Thessalonica. Thessalonica, a prominent city of the Roman province of Macedonia, was situated in the northern part of the Aegean Sea. It was a wealthy and large city, and for a time, the most influential center in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. Many Jews had settled here and a flourishing Synagogue existed at the time the Apostle Paul came from Philippi.

The visit of the Apostle Paul to Thessalonica is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Acts. It will be well for the student to know some of the experiences that Paul had with his associates in establishing the church at Philippi. We learn in the study of the Acts why Paul was in prison. The magistrates of the city of Philippi had beaten the Apostle and his friends and put them in prison openly and uncondemned, being Romans, when God manifested His mighty power in opening the prison doors and releasing Paul with his associates. These magistrates became alarmed and wanted to get rid of them secretly, but the Apostle said, "Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out," and they came and brought them out and desired them to depart out of the city. They went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren they comforted them and departed. Of this experience, the Apostle tells us in the first letter to the Thessalonians. Leaving Philippi with Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy, they went on their way to Thessalonica and passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia.

When they arrived at Thessalonica. Paul followed his usual custom and visited the synagogue.

Paul tells us that for three Sabbaths he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. The Scriptures, of course, were the Old Testament Scriptures, for the New Testament was not then in existence. He opened the Scriptures that were familiar to his hearers, and without mentioning the name of the Lord Jesus at all, he showed that the Old Testament teaches that the Messiah promised to them must suffer and rise from the dead. This great truth was forgotten by the Jewish nation, that the sufferings of the Messiah come first and the glory follows. This crucified Christ was their stumbling block. They looked only for the glory side, and the accomplishment, through Him, of the national promises. The predictions of the suffering and the resurrection of Christ were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. In this Epistle we find that Paul taught more than this because he emphasizes in every chapter of the first book that Christ would come again. In the second Epistle he also shows that he had given them instructions in dispensational and prophetic truths (2 Thess. 2:5).

The Thessalonian Church was a model Church and had no need of reproof and correction such as we find in Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians. This first Epistle contains the great doctrine so much needed by the Christian Church, and which was not clear to this Thessalonian Church, but made clear to them as well as to all future Churches (1 Thess. 4:13-18). These disciples had been instructed concerning the teaching of justification as found in the Book of Romans and had passed in a sense, the advanced truth set out in the Book of Ephesians.

This is the only one of the seven churches that was especially spoken of as "the Model Church." Things were more in harmony than in any of the other Churches to whom the Apostle wrote. The main difficulty in this Church was concerning the Christians who had died and the Christians living at the coming of the Christ. In this last closing book of the

Church Epistles presented by the Holy Spirit, he has no need to say what he has said in the former Epistles and therefore, we have no Epistle following this one. When we reach redemption of the body—glorification, there is no need to call attention to practical and doctrinal errors. It is true that in one place in this Church letter “we hear that there are some who walk among you in disorder, working not at all but busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread” (2 Thess. 3:11-12). This is the one exception to the thing that we have stated before concerning this Church letter.

We have tried to emphasize the fact that this is a model Church. It is a model Church because of its missionary activities, and such doctrine as held by this Church produces faithful and fruitful service for God. We will not take up in this introduction the teaching of the various lessons, but you will find an exposition of this exception in the chapter where this occurs.

TO THE MANY MEMBERS
of the
Bible Students' League
Who Have
So Often Spoken and Written
Words of Inspiration and Cheer to the Author
These Books
on the
CHURCH EPISTLES
Are Affectionately Dedicated

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ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

I. The Model Church and Its Blessed Condition, 1:1-10

WHEN Paul was at Troas, a voice came to him at night. A man of Macedonia was praying, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Paul was obedient unto that vision and realized it was a call from the Lord to preach the Gospel in the country to which he is now invited. He went to Philippi, started a revival, and founded the first church in Europe. Because of persecution they were driven out of this place and came to Thessalonica, where Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.

This was a city of commercial and political importance in the Apostolic age. It was a city of about 70,000 inhabitants and no doubt worse in many respects than any of our modern cities. The Gentiles were sunken into the very depths of sin and degradation and were making unto themselves man-made idols. The Jews, themselves, hated the very name of Christ, the Christ whom they had nailed to the cross. Is it any wonder that these disciples were driven out of the city when introducing a person whom the Jews had nailed to the cross, and holding Him up as their Savior? However, the Apostle comes into the city, after being beaten with many stripes and delivered from prison.

A missionary coming as Paul did would not be written up in the newspapers as a great revivalist and one coming in the interest of sanitation and community betterment. He went into Thessalonica with but one mission, and we learn that for three days he reasoned with these people out of the Word of God. The Apostle had no bands of music or church choir. He could not make any sensational announcements such as

many use in this day to draw crowds. None of the modern tricks or contrivances were used. How was it possible for him to present this truth and organize a Church when remaining but three Sabbath days in the city?

The Prophet Isaiah says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper unto the day whereto I send it." The Word of God is living and powerful. It has as much life and power as it ever had. The need of this age is men and women who have not lost faith in this living and powerful Word of God and will do as Paul did, "reason out of the Scriptures."

It is well for us to ascertain the secret which produced this Model Church by a prayerful and careful study of the letters sent to it which will help us to establish Churches full of faith. We do not believe that the Apostle reasoned away any part of the Scriptures. He did not need to argue about inspiration because he himself believed in it. He believed in the authority of the Word of God and, therefore, that was settled in his mind. He believed in the crucified Christ, in the resurrected Christ, in the ascended Christ, in the interceding Christ, in the coming Christ, and in making this Christ King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

1. GREETINGS AND THANKSGIVING, 1:1-4

Ver. 1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: grace to you and peace.

Paul and his associates mentioned here were the instruments God used in bringing the Gospel to this city. The author did not speak of himself as an Apostle of God as he did in nine of his other Epistles. In Romans and Titus he calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ and of God. He used his Apostolic title in the strongest way possible when he addressed the Church of Galatia and of Corinth because they were troubled with false teachers who tried to set aside the

Apostle as a teacher of authority. This difficulty did not exist in Thessalonica and therefore, he did not need to call their remembrance to his apostolic office. In the other Epistles he did not defend this title to call attention to himself, but because he was assailed by false teachers.

The Apostle had religious companions who could be trusted. Timothy was instructed in the Scriptures from his youth. The faith he enjoyed was transmitted from his grandmother and mother, and so the faith enjoyed by Timothy came from those who were obedient unto the Word of God. The Apostle had chosen Silas, one of the Jewish Christians who, like Stephen, had, from the beginning, an unbiased mind concerning Jewish and Gentile converts. This large-heartedness and love was very hard to find in that early transition period from Judaism and legalism to that of freedom in Christ through faith. It was during the second missionary journey that the Apostle is at Thessalonica with his associates. Both of these are in work and suffering with Paul, before magistrates, in stripes, in prison, in prayer, in miraculous deliverance, in flight (Acts. 16:19-25, 29; Acts, 17:4, 10, 14; Acts, 18:5). Therefore these two disciples appear in the introduction of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Although three very prominent men as leaders, they are united in the advancement of the work of Christ, and so these Epistles are introduced "by the mouth of two or three witnesses," which was necessary to establish the Word of God.

The Apostle directed this letter to the Church and he includes himself and these other associates with this Church, not mentioning himself as one called an Apostle. He writes to the Church officials but also to the Church and (5:27) he, in a more solemn manner, requires that all the brethren should read this Epistle, teaching that some authority had gone forth to deny the reading of the Scriptures to the laity, and this is certainly contrary to the instruction given by the Apostle Paul as the author of this letter. The Church is looked upon as the family of God and the child of God.

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Can we appreciate the transformation that had taken place in these Thessalonians? They believed the Gospel of God. They were born again and now were enjoying the blessed relationship of God as Father. The Apostle nowhere has given us any other method of getting into the family of God than by the way these brethren had been admitted. We become sons of God by being perfectly related to Jesus Christ, and when we are sons then there is earnest expectation of the creation waiting for such manifestation of the sons of God (Romans 8:19). The Apostle John in writing of this holy family of God says, "I write unto you little children, because you have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). When Paul was writing this letter there was a Model Church. A Church is a miracle of God for which the Apostle gives glory and thanks.

Ver. 2. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.

The Apostle introduces this verse with the pronoun "we," including Silvanus and Timothy with him in this thanksgiving. All of Paul's Epistles, with one exception, commence with an expression of thanksgiving.

Ver. 3. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father.

Paul with his companions is at Corinth and he means to say to these people, "When we pray for you at Thessalonica." The Apostle's form of prayer for these young converts takes the form of thanksgiving. Paul had something on which to rest his faith and, therefore, it is expressed in thanksgiving to God. Paul knows that these Thessalonians who have come out of sin and death, took their stand in the face of tremendous opposition with Christ; that they are among the chosen elected ones. He remembers very vividly the work that was accomplished through faith. Paul is mindful of three fundamental elements of life—faith, love, hope (5:8; 1 Cor. 13:13; Col. 1:4-5). The work which is the product of faith is the turning

from Judaism to Christ. The labor of love was in change of service, and in serving the living and true God (Ver. 9). The patience of hope was in waiting for God's Son from Heaven (Ver. 10).

Here, at the very opening of this letter, the Apostle calls specific attention to works of faith, labor of love, patience in endurance, that the blessed hope of the Christian might be fully realized. Faith lays hold of the fact begun in our redemption and is the foundation of Christian life. The element of Divine love in the heart of man is the power opposing selfishness. The hope knows that the future belongs to the Lord, and His Church. It is the expectation and the soul's prospect that all will finally be complete in God.

Paul rejoices here, first of all, in the vigor of their life and faith, in that they have not yet become vain, and then in the fact that during this difficult period, the Thessalonian Church members were exposed to manifold vexations, but were held together in mutual love and continued with laborious efforts and sacrifice to help one another. Hope is a great incentive to action. One can more easily bear the present sufferings with prospects of glory ahead. In the early Christian Church the blessed hope was so developed that the Apostle Paul says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed unto us" (Rom. 8:18). This blessed hope increases a person's Spiritual capital. The Christian has his wealth laid up "where moth and rust doth not corrupt and thieves cannot break through and steal." This holds him steady under all circumstances to endure any kind of suffering because it develops this patience and confirms his hope. All this takes place in the presence of God our Father. God's eye that never sleeps, sees His Own Church that is being built by His Son. This shows God's interest in all the redeemed ones. Be of good cheer to suffer in the presence of God.

Ver. 4. Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election.

Paul had called our attention to the fact that God is watching over us and sees us in our struggles and battles for the

right. He here says, "Knowing, brethren beloved." He knew of their work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope and now he says, "Know that thou are elected (chosen)." They are permitted to regard themselves as objects of special favor of God's power. They themselves knew that their Christianity was no dream or vapor, but the evidence of the everlasting purpose of God's Own Love. These are members of the Body of Christ. Christ was called before the foundation of the world and these were elected in Him when he was called to be the Head of the Church. These converts, whether Jews or Gentiles, in the Thessalonian Church were chosen or elected by God from among their heathen countrymen to become members of the Body of Christ.

QUESTIONS

Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Who was with Paul in the writing?

Explain meaning of grace and peace.

Give the reason for Paul giving thanks.

What persecution had to be endured by the Thessalonians at the time of the writing of this Epistle?

2. THE GOSPEL OF GOD AND ITS BLESSED FRUITS, 1:5-7

The Apostle with his associates had given thanks unto God for this Church, encouraging these members by telling them that God, to whom they belong, is looking down upon them. They are among the chosen and elect of God. He now makes mention of the Gospel of God and what it had wrought among them.

Ver. 5. How that our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (fulness); even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake.

These three brethren had preached in Thessalonica, the good news of the Gospel, that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ would deliver them from sin and clothe them with a righteous-

ness not their own. This Gospel not only came to them through the utterance of words, but it came in demonstrations and power. It had its effect upon the soul and quickened them so that through God's own power they passed out of sin into life. It was not done as it is now, by simply teaching and reasoning, unaccompanied by the leading of the Spirit. These preachers believed in regeneration, and insisted on a change of heart and life and brought the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. We have a difference in Thessalonica between those who are members of the Church and those who are still in the world, as marked as the difference between the present state of these Christians and their former sinful life. This marvelous manifestation could not be denied, as they had the experience in their hearts and the Thessalonians were ready to testify that this Gospel was the power of God unto their salvation.

The Gospel was not only preached and accompanied-with power of the Holy Spirit but it was accompanied with much assurance. This gives us to understand that the man that is renewed through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ knows it and has no doubt in his heart. When conversion comes through the power of the Word and quickening of the Holy Spirit, we have the full assurance, not only that the Gospel is true, but that we have received redemption of our sins and have become changed from death to life.

The Apostle here calls attention to what God has wrought through them as ministers of the Gospel. They were living witnesses of this power of the Word and Holy Spirit. Their holy walk, their self denial, their suffering, helped them to realize that they were servants of the true and living God. They did not go down from Phillippi unto Thessalonica because the field appealed to them from the material or financial standpoint. They left Philippi with bleeding and sore backs, just because they were true to the incarnate Lord. They traveled about one hundred miles and came to this large and wicked city of Thessalonica where God wrought such wondrous things

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through their faithfulness to the Gospel. It is no doubt that the experiences at Philippi were still vivid in their memories because of the sufferings from the lashes that were laid upon them.

The Apostle has, in different places, emphasized this, saying, "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you was not in vain." When a missionary enters a city as Paul and his associates did, God has an opportunity to manifest His power, when His Word is preached by those who have conviction and show it through suffering as these did.

Ver. 6. And ye became imitators (followers) of us and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.

These were messengers who followed closely the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Thessalonians became imitators of them, and thus imitators of the Lord. These Thessalonians believed the same truth, walked in the same way and minded the same things because they became followers of the preachers of the Gospel and the Lord. They believed and experienced that the doctrine was of the Lord. This is the second reason sounded by the Apostle for his confidence in their election. They became imitators of those who founded the Church. They became imitators of Christ. It was this imitation of their joyful endurance of suffering that caused the Apostle to give thanks. They not only received the Word, but they received it with much affliction. We learn much about these in the study of the Acts of the Apostles. There was a large settlement of unbelieving Jews who stirred up the Gentiles and brought persecution against Paul and his associates (Acts 17:7-10). It became necessary for them to depart from Thessalonica. Even after Paul had left, the persecution was continued and perhaps increased. Gentiles united with the unbelieving Jews against the Christians, and caused the converts to suffer from Gentile influence as well as from the Jews.

In such a city, with such opposition against uniting with the Lord Jesus Christ, conversion was an act of personal courage calling for self-denial because through it a man might lose comfort, honor, and power among his countrymen, and even life itself. However, there is comfort in this gain. There is joy in the Holy Ghost. It is the joy that comes by being true to our guide who leads us into these great things of God for the heart to rest upon, that makes it possible to endure any kind of suffering. Spiritual joy does not exclude, but even includes sorrow.

Ver. 7. So that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.

These Thessalonian brethren were a pattern to all others. It would be well to still hold them up as a pattern even in this age of civilization and opportunities. The true followers became themselves in turn, patterns for others. This was a model Church and these are model Christians. The follower of Christ is an example unto others and others may become disciples through him. If you do not feel strong enough to be a pattern unto others, it might be well to go back to the A-B-C book, the Book of Romans, and learn the lessons there presented by the Holy Spirit; or study Paul's conversion, his vision of the Lord on the way to Damascus, his intense interest in preaching the Gospel of the Lord. These may help you to become a pattern such as the Holy Spirit could use to bring people unto Christ. Paul was willing to go even to his death in order to be true to the teaching of the Word of God. He could sing at the midnight hour, or go with his back sore with stripes to open up a further work for the Lord. Such a missionary these Thessalonians had as a pattern, and so they became a pattern unto others until their faith was spread about through all Macedonia and Achaia.

The Gospel was thus carried through Northern and Southern Greece like the sound of a trumpet. These two divisions of Greece included all the Roman empire, and they received

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the Gospel as a joyful sound proclaimed with no uncertainty of liberty to the captives. This work of grace quickly reached to other places and churches already in existence were stirred and stimulated by the visible work of grace at Thessalonica. The Church needs to study and come in possession of these great truths in this church letter in order to be set on fire for greater missionary activities in this modern age.

QUESTIONS

What was a token of the righteous judgment of God?

What makes us worthy?

What was a righteous thing with God?

3. THE MISSIONARY CHURCH, 1:8-10

There was no need of saying anything to others about these Thessalonian Christians. We do not hear him call attention to the genuineness of their conversion. These Thessalonian believers gave such a strong and full testimony that it was wholly unnecessary for the writer to say anything about them.

Ver. 8. For from you hath sounded forth the Word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything.

Thessalonica was very conveniently situated for traffic. Many persons traveled out from this point through Macedonia into different parts of Greece. The Gospel had made its influence felt far and wide through a number of persons of Thessalonica just because of the genuineness and absence of doubt concerning the power of God and His Word.' The Word of God had its own way in the hearts of these people and was so powerful there that it produced a movement so lively and loud that the sound thereof was like that of a trumpet. The people have heard it everywhere, for the sound went out until all the earth heard their words unto the end of the world. This was not only true in Macedonia and

Achaia. The faith of these Thessalonians was spread abroad into every place. Their joyful acceptance of the Gospel has excited universal attention.

We are emphasizing in this Epistle that this was a missionary Church, because the Church members had the Gospel of God in the heart. Moses said, unto the children of Israel, "Let this Word be in thine heart." The only persons whom the inspired writer recognizes as competent teachers of the Word are the ones who have the Word in the heart. Only those can teach it diligently who have made this Word their own. That is what makes a missionary. Missionaries are not made by any other method than by knowing the Word of God as these missionaries knew it. The Apostle Paul says, "So that we need not speak of anything. Your faith is already so well known and applauded that there is no further need of testimony." Their testimony is presented in the next verse.

Ver. 9. For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God.

"Entering." He evidently refers not to the outward entrance and preaching of the Gospel unto the Thessalonians, but the eternal entrance of the Gospel from the Lord into their hearts. It also means the confidence and degree of reception. The Apostle frequently refers to this entrance which seems to be the reason for reception of the Gospel. If missionaries would enter as Paul and his associates did, people would believe that they were in possession of something that is needed because of conviction. Think of preaching the Gospel and making people turn unto a living God in a city influenced with making and worshipping idols; coming out in the open to be criticized, persecuted and even put to death.

The Thessalonian Church was chiefly composed of Gentile converts who were no longer serving idols but the true and living God. In this they are manifesting their genuineness of conversion and other characteristics of the Christian believer.

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They had a living God instead of dead idols. They had turned from these man-made idols unto the living and true God.

Ver. 10. And to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.

This is the patience of hope mentioned in Ver. 3. The Apostle defines the life of these converts in the second chapter. They are the servants of God waiting for the return of His Son from Heaven. These Thessalonians were waiting for the Son, now seated at the right hand of God. God, by His miraculous power, brought Christ from the grave, and because Christ came from the grave as a living Saviour, we who have believed in the cross, in this risen glorified Christ, are also now delivered from the God of wrath.

Christ, the Son of God, has ascended unto the right hand of the Father. He is now building His Church. He is making intercession for us who are members of His Body. In this model Church the believers had no doubt as to their deliverance as taught in the Book of Romans. They were imitators of Paul and his associates and of the Lord. They believed in the mystery, the forming of the Body of Christ in this age. This Church believed in the return of the Lord Jesus, and they believed in the imminent coming of Christ at any time. This book of glorification is full of teaching on the Lord's return. This great blessed hope was kept continually upon their minds. It was that which steadied the Early Church in the days of suffering and martyrdom. They were instructed to watch and pray, that the Lord Jesus might return from Heaven at any time. This same hope, held by this model Church, was needed in every period of this age of grace, that suffering and persecution might be endured and through it, preparation made for the Lord's coming.

The Christian expects a future state of glory. The follower of Christ is promised a glorified body. Christ was raised from the dead and in the public inauguration of His Divine Sonship, because God raised Him from the dead, we all believe in the

resurrection of the body of those who are His. We have been delivered from sin and death through Christ and we are made complete through the redemption of our bodies.

QUESTIONS

Who is to be present and enjoy the revelation of Jesus?

Who will be with Him in His coming judgment?

Who will He take vengeance upon when He comes?

What is the duration of punishment and what is the duration of joy?

What punishment is described for the wicked?

In whom will Christ be glorified?

II. Apostolic Service and Reward, 2:1-20

1. BOLDNESS IN DECLARING THE GOSPEL, 2:1-4

Paul turns from the reports of others to the experience of the readers. They themselves knew that his entrance was not powerless, for although maltreated in Philippi he was emboldened to preach the Gospel at Thessalonica. His preaching did not proceed either from delusion on his part, or from a desire to delude others. He felt approved of God, and was actuated by no improper motive. He here enlarges upon the brief statement in the previous chapter, "Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

Ver. 1. For yourselves, brethren, know our entering in unto you, that it hath not been found vain.

His conduct and character as well as that of his fellow-laborers corresponded fully with the holy character of the truth they preached. They walked worthy of the Gospel and the Lord whom they represented. The disciples at Thessalonica knew experimentally of the influence and power of the preaching of the Gospel. They not only heard Paul and his associates declare the Gospel of God but had felt the influence and power upon their own lives. This shows that the Apostle had something worth while when he entered into this great and wicked city and commenced to tell the story of Jesus among the

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prejudiced Jews and idolatrous Gentiles. The entrance was mighty, energetic and powerful. No wonder the Apostle could say, "And if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is also in vain." (1 Cor. 15:14).

The Apostle had a Heavenly call to do work for the Lord in Macedonia. He immediately responded to the call and established a Church at Philippi and because of seeing and knowing His Lord, continued his missionary efforts against all opposition, establishing this model Thessalonian Church. If ministers, Sunday-school teachers and missionaries had as rich an experience with the personal Christ as the early disciples had, modernism would not have its influence upon the Christian Church as is seen today. We learn here what suffering, persecution, imprisonment and even martyrdom had to be met in that early Church period to organize and establish religious centers. If the Christian Church today would take her orders from Christ, the builder of the Church, and depend upon the Holy Spirit to execute said orders, there would be the same difference between the Church and the world as there was in Paul's day.

Ver. 2. But having suffered before, and been shamefully treated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God in much conflict (contention).

The Apostle makes mention of the suffering he and Silas endured at Philippi where they had been shamefully treated, stripped and scourged, with a rod, and cast into prison with their feet made fast in the stocks. It no doubt took a long time until they were entirely free of bodily pain, because of this persecution. This, however, did not hinder them in continuing their missionary efforts. With confidence in God they preached the Gospel at Thessalonica where they also had much conflict. Think of the disadvantages these early missionaries had immediately after experiencing this severe persecution, traveling a distance of a hundred miles or more to begin work for the Lord where they were exposed to continuous danger. This shows what men will do and endure who are acquainted

with God and His Word. These were not ring leaders and flatterers of the people nor ambitious persons who sought their own advantage. Their suffering was God-given and they were fully conscious of the fact. It is a wonderful thing to be entrusted with the Gospel of God. Those who are entrusted with the Gospel and given Heavenly credentials need not employ man-made schemes to be successful. They have full confidence in God and have only God-made messages to deliver to sinful man.

They did not use flattery as a cloak of covetousness nor use all kinds of methods used in these modern times to secure means to carry forward the work of the Church. They believed themselves to be Christ's messengers and witnesses and they could truthfully say, "God is our witness." They had sought nothing of man, neither money nor glory. These religious leaders were beaten openly, uncondemned, as Roman citizens, and cast into prison. This was done on account of the boldness and freedom of speech. All this happened because of their confidence in God. They were in fellowship and union with Him. This verse informs us that in the opening of this missionary enterprise in Thessalonica these leaders met with strenuous opposition. There was much contention or conflict with the Jews who believed in the works of the law and opposed the suffering of the Messiah.

Ver. 3. For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile.

The origin and source from which it came was not deception or impurity. Paul had to defend himself against those who brought false accusations against all those who preached the Gospel. Paul means that they do not do like the heathen in their worship, give occasion to unclean practice. "We have corrupted no man" (2 Cor. 7:2). "We were not deceived ourselves, so we do not attempt to deceive others." A man who receives the Gospel as Paul did can have but one aim which is to be honest with the persons to whom he presents it. He

was the first missionary who had come to Europe to present Christ crucified to these heathen cities. The mass of men whether Jews or heathen, could not understand his noble character which was high above them. They judged him by themselves. They were incapable of such self denial for the sake of others. It angered them. They could not bear to think of its contrast with their own life, so they believed or forced themselves to believe that it was not genuine.

Ver. 4. But even as we have been approved (allowed) of God to be intrusted with the Gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts.

They were tested of God as gold is tested in the fire; therefore, having been proven, they are estimated worthy to be entrusted with the Gospel of God. That is, they were entrusted with the publication of it. "Even so we speak." That is, "we speak not for the purpose of pleasing men but for the purpose of pleasing God. God's authority and power is with His Word and this we know by experience.

God's Word is inspired, "For the Word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and is a discernor of the thought and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Paul here appeals to God as the infallible judge of their sincerity. Paul, as a messenger of God was conscious of the wonderful privilege granted him by God in being entrusted with the Gospel. This gave him boldness to speak for God and made him fearless in declaring the messages He had for sinful man. Ministers who realize that they have been entrusted with the Gospel of God cannot use man-made messages to please men, but Christ's messages to convict and regenerate them. God is now proving and testing all those who are entrusted with the Gospel of God. He is the searcher of hearts and knows all motives of work and service. They did not speak the praise of the men at Thessalonica. They worked for that which God could approve and clothed men with the righteousness of Christ.

What their preaching was: (1) Their character is one of childlike simplicity, (2) They were actuated by the strong love for souls, (3) They were not burdensome to their new converts, (4) They set a high example, (5) They taught their converts individually, (6) They walked worthy of the high calling.

QUESTIONS

How often does Paul speak about entering in, in Thessalonians?

In what sense is it not in vain?

Tell where the first church was founded in Europe.

What was the experience of those who founded this church?

What made these preachers so bold in preaching the Gospel?

What is meant by being put in trust of the Gospel?

Tell what it means not to please men but to please God?

2. THE SPIRIT AND THE METHOD OF APOSTOLIC LABOR, 2:5-8

The Apostle sets this forth under two aspects,—Negatively 5-6, Positively 7-8.

Ver. 5. For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness. God is witness.

This is to confirm the statement made in the preceding verses that the preachers of the Gospel did not preach to please men but God. They in no sense used flattering words to work upon the feelings of the people in order that they might draw praise unto themselves. They did not try to present the Gospel in a smooth perverted way. They believed just what God said in His Word and wanted others to believe it in the same way. If they had preached a perverted Gospel using words of flattery, they might have had an increase in numbers at their revivals, but not conversions. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to regenerate, to transform men, not to add numbers without change of character.

"As ye know." The Church established under the preaching and power of the Word of God knows the difference between the men who flatter the people with a perverted Gospel and those who preach the Word with power under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Paul could with perfect confidence appeal to his converts to have coveted no man's silver, gold nor apparel. Paul here appeals to the Thessalonians that he had not used flattering words nor a cloak of covetousness and to confirm what he has to say he calls upon God as his witness. Men can judge the external conduct, but God can know the motive of action.

Ver. 6. Nor seeking glory of men neither from you, nor from others, when we might have been burdensome, as apostles of Christ.

The Apostle emphasizes the fact that men who seek glory from men can enjoy such but for a season. Men perish and their glory perishes with them, but those who seek the glory of God come in possession of that which abides forever. We might have claimed honor by being burdensome (which was our privilege), and received glory as apostles of Christ. The word "apostles" is to be taken in its wider meaning as Paul includes himself and his associates. These ambassadors of God were appointed and anointed by Christ and were looking beyond man for glory and reward. The disciples' actions are the very spirit of the Good Shepherd. The servants of the Lord must not provoke but be gentle with all men, apt to teach—in meekness, instructing those who oppose them (2 Tim. 2:24).

Ver. 7. But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children.

Here the Apostle described their conduct positively. We were gentle. It is that of a superior to an inferior. It is that of a master toward his servant. He that is greatest (Christ) is the servant (Matt. 20:27-28). The unkind, impatient spirit was completely absent in these ambassadors for

Christ. Paul adduces the most touching type of human tenderness—the nursing mother cherishing her own children, warming them in her bosom. Such had been his gentleness among his children after the faith. He had sought to win them by gentle words. He had set before them the attractive picture of the Saviour's tender love.

Ver. 8. Even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us.

Their yearning was manifest by imparting the Gospel to them. The persons addressed here are members of the Body of Christ. Such relationship is of the highest order and compels supreme love. "The Word of God had so wrought with us that we estimated it a great privilege to do these positive things we declare here. We were not only willing to preach the Gospel unto you but also to sacrifice our own lives for your spiritual welfare." These Spiritual parents are willing to submit to death if need be in order that the Christian Church might be established at Thessalonica. They verily carried their lives in their hands. These disciples of Christ at Thessalonica are fruits of labor bestowed by the Apostles in forming this church. Members of the Body of Christ are very dear and precious to one another and willing to suffer and even die for one another that God's name, who is the Head of the Body, might be honored and glorified.

QUESTIONS

State what the Apostles did not do to win men.

1. Did not attempt to win their way by flattery.
2. Did not use their position as a cloak of covetousness.
3. They were not fond of glory.

What methods did they use to win their way?

1. They were gentle and unassuming with their converts.
2. They were most affectionate with their converts.
3. They would have paid the price of their own lives to win them.

3. GOD AND THE THESSALONIAN SAINTS WITNESSETH AS TO BLAMELESSNESS, 2:9-12

In these verses he recalls the circumstances of his ardent and laborious ministry among them. He could say here what he had said to the Corinthians, that he had approved himself as the minister of God in his labors.

Ver. 9. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God.

This proves the very close fellowship that existed between Paul and this church. He reminds them of his conduct while with them. The expression in this connection denotes the most strenuous bodily labor. He was doing this missionary work and at the same time supporting himself as a soul winner. The Apostle was at this place just a little over three weeks and when he speaks about his labor he says, "working night and day." To have the word "night" occur first is in harmony with the Jewish mode of reckoning. He was a tentmaker. This does not mean that he worked at night and preached in the day time, but night and day denotes that he was at it incessantly and continually. The Apostle here emphasizes the fact that he did not add to the burdens of these people by asking for his support. He did not want the Thessalonian church nor any other, to get the idea that he was doing this missionary work there for any material gain, no matter what it would be. He did not even seek the necessities of life from them that he might be known among them as giving and not receiving. When writing this Epistle to the church at Thessalonica, the Apostle was supporting himself by tentmaking at Corinth (1 Cor. 4:12). The same is true when he established the church at Ephesus and calls attention to this fact in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, "You yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessity and to them that were with me."

Ver. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously (justly) and unblamably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe.

The Apostle needs no greater testimony concerning his preaching and of not being burdensome by support than that of the Thessalonians and of God. He has refuted the reproaches cast upon him as shown in Ver. 3, and shows that such charges are false, that he has not labored for any selfish motive or covetousness, but for the Gospel of God, for which he has God and the Thessalonians as his witnesses. He speaks of his conduct before God and these believers. He realized that he was justified and the believers were justified before God and that they had a relationship to God not appreciated by his accusers. The testimony of these saints could always be relied upon, and their witnessing would be in harmony with the witnessing of God.

Ver. 11. As ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you and testifying.

Paul here changes his image from that of a nursing mother to that of a father. He was before speaking of his tender care for his converts, now he speaks of the instructions and admonitions which he gave them; as a mother he nourished their spiritual life, and as a father he superintended their spiritual exhortation. Here we have three modes of the Apostle's instruction: Exhorting, denotes also encouraging and testifying; encouraging (comforting), denotes supporting and sustaining, "Comfort the feeble minded" (5:14); testifying, denotes pressing home exhortations upon the hearers. There are times when a father addresses his children as with his dying breath, not to give way to temptations but to follow in the path of duty; so there are times when it is becoming of the minister of the Gospel to address his people as with his dying breath, (because of the dreadful issues at stake) not to allow themselves to be cheated out of happiness, but to make sure of Christ as their everlasting portion.

Ver. 12. To the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into His own kingdom and glory.

The Apostle is addressing those who are born of God, saying that they should walk as children worthy of Him. Paul is talking to those who know and have experienced that they are saved. We should aim at the highest attainment though as yet we are far from it. We may truly honor God by our character and deeds. We can walk on this lowly earth and yet be worthy of God. When we keep obeying and doing the things of God, then we are walking worthily. The Christian needs constant exercise in telling the story of the cross, in speaking to lost souls and bringing them out of darkness into the marvelous light. This was the object of Paul's preaching and it must be the object of the preacher in every period of the age of grace. God has called us, made us worthy by our position in Christ the Head as members in His Body to sit with Him in the Heavenlies, knowing that Christ is now in His glorified body and we are to be like Him through resurrection in glory.

QUESTIONS

What did the Apostle do in order not to be burdensome to the young converts?

How does this differ from the present methods of establishing churches and preaching the Gospel?

Who are the witnesses as to Paul's work in Thessalonica?

What must one do to walk worthy of God?

4. THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL, 2:13-16

The Apostle shows in these verses how the Thessalonian brethren received the Gospel. They believed that it came from God. Here we have an evidence of the teaching that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Ver. 13. And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing that when ye received from us the Word of the message, even the Word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

The Apostle has reason to thank God and to do so continually on account of what God did through His Word in choos-

ing and electing these Thessalonians as members of the Body of Christ. These Thessalonians received the Gospel of God. This was in a way the free and voluntary act on their part; yet in another sense, it was the act of God who ordained them to accept the Gospel. Their belief was an operation of God in them. It is the Word of hearing which is of God. It was God's Word which they heard. This is the way that faith comes and is made strong. It is the Word whose authority is God. Paul had no other method to give to these Thessalonians but the method of God as the Holy Spirit tells us (Rom. 1:1), that he was separated unto the Gospel of God. When the Gospel of God is preached the preacher and hearer know and experience that it is living and powerful. These messages from the Gospel of God have influence upon the heart different from man-made messages.

We learn from this and the former verses what a man can do when he knows the Word of God and his own life has been transformed through its power. The modern preacher must be transformed and have the experience that he has come out of darkness into the light and thus know the Word and its power in order to present the messages for the saving of souls. There is much perverting of the Gospel and thus no increase of faith and the saving of the lost. Every minister of the Gospel who stands before the world as a mouth piece of God is occupying the highest position to which men can be called and therefore must continually aim to please God, and must know and be loyal to the Word of Truth. These disciples did not receive the Gospel as of human origin but of Divine. They believed it to be supernatural. The Holy Spirit was active among them showing to them the Word of life. The believer is sanctified through a right use of the Word of God (John 17:17).

Ver. 14. For ye, brethren, became imitators (followers) of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews.

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The apostles were followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and they had the same influence upon the Thessalonians. Men who are faithful and loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ bring others into the same faith and loyalty to Christ. Christ and the apostles suffered much in establishing the Gospel of God. The bearers of Divine Truth are always expelled by the natural community to which they belong (Matt. 10:35-37). The Thessalonian Christians are also experiencing bitter opposition from Gentiles and Jews because of their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, similar to that experienced by the prophets and Christ in the city of Jerusalem when Christ, who is the Head of the Church, had to die at the hands of wicked men. That which is really Divine is hated by the world and always strongly opposed by those who belong to the world (John 7:7, 15:18). The power to endure this enmity from fellow countrymen likewise rests in God's operation in the believer. This strong opposition by Judaizing brethren and unrighteous Gentiles does not weaken the faith of the members of the model Church. The majority of them that were of the Church at Thessalonica were Gentiles so the persecution was undoubtedly mainly from the unconverted Jew. After Paul and his companions had left Thessalonica the persecution which arose against the Christians continued as Gentiles combined with Jews in opposing the Gospel. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles that the Jewish Christians in Judea were exposed to severe persecution from their unbelieving countrymen. It was by these that Stephen was put to death and Paul was associated with them before his conversion.

Ver. 15. Who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men.

The Apostle is emphasizing here the degree of their wickedness. If they killed the Lord (1 Cor. 2:8) is it to be wondered if they persecute his servants (John 15:20)? Jesus said, "Ye are witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets" (Matt. 23:31). Stephen,

the martyr, said, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?"

"And persecuted us." Literally, driven us out. Paul and his associates were driven out and knew by experience what it was to meet the opposers of the Gospel of God. Paul brings a very solemn charge against his countrymen, the Jews. They had killed the Lord and the prophets and now were persecuting the apostles. They were not entirely satisfied with this but did their best to keep the Gospel that they hated from reaching the Gentiles, so that they might not be saved. They were a class that were more interested in pleasing men than God. They were faithful to obstinacy and merciful to themselves, and to all others actuated by the most unmerciful hatred. The Apostle especially emphasizes their opposition to his preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. They did not believe that the Gentiles ought to be admitted upon the same terms into fellowship and communion. The Apostle of the Gentiles, led by the Holy Spirit, goes forward in his commission to the Gentiles and in this first letter pronounces judgment against his own nation. This nation has been set aside for a period of time which will not end until the fulness of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25-26). He who neglects his own salvation does not want others to enjoy what he does not enjoy. Those who shed Christ's blood persecuted the apostles, and the followers of Christ in every age are known as the capital enemies of all mankind.

Ver. 16. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved: to fill up their sins always; but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Paul found it difficult to present the truth to the Gentiles because of this contradiction, blasphemy, and false accusation from the Jews. The Jews were not against proselytizing providing they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses. Paul in preaching the Gospel emphasized faith as a means of salvation, and not works. Paul emphasized in the teaching to the Ephesians, (3:3) that when the Gentiles and Jews

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believed in the Lord Jesus Christ they became one new man. Jews did not become Gentiles, nor Gentiles become Jews, but they became one in Christ Jesus.

"To fill up their sins alway." They were by this method filling up their cup of iniquity by forbidding the Apostle to preach to the Gentiles. The cup of iniquity was already full and overflowing. Men are enlisted either under the captain, Satan, who leads on from one iniquity to another until the cup is full and overflowing, or under the Captain, Christ Jesus, who leads on from victory to victory and glory to glory. We learn here that the wrath of God is come upon them unto the uttermost. This means, to their very end. The Apostle refers here to the judgments of God which were impending upon the Jewish people, judgments which were fearfully executed in awful suffering during the Jewish war and in the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS

Why did Paul thank God without ceasing?

What was the difference between receiving the Gospel as the word of men and the Word of God?

Is there any difference between a sermon known as the word of men and a sermon known as the Word of God?

What crime does Paul mention against his own country-men?

Explain the meaning of, "To fill up their own sins."

5. PAUL'S LOVE FOR HIS CONVERTS, 2:17-20

The Apostle, having learned about the condition of the converts of Thessalonica, and having himself preached and established his church has a longing desire to return from Corinth and be with them. He is considerable distance away and yet he is with them in the hour of prayer, remembering them in his thanksgiving.

Ver. 17. But we, brethren, being bereaved of (taken from) you for a short season, in presence, not in heart, endeavored, the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire.

The Apostle was really driven away from these Christians to whom he is writing. "Being taken from you for a short

time." It is, however, several years before the Apostle visits this church again. It is about six months or more since he has been separated from them. The Christians were like orphans when the founders were driven out. They were separated, but not in heart, "Though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the Spirit" (Col. 2:5).

Ver. 18. Because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us.

The Apostle means to say to these Christians that there is no fault on his part that he has not visited them. "Even I Paul." Paul distinguishes himself because Silas and Timotheus no doubt had been in the meanwhile with the Church at Thessalonica. "Once and again." Paul had made at least two separate attempts to revisit the Thessalonian Church and was hindered by Satan, the personal agent who is evil and influences man. "We willed to come unto you but Satan hindered us." He is the person who acts through wicked men, even when his name is not mentioned. The Devil is the author of all hindrances to Christianity; the great opponent to Christ and God. We are not informed just the different methods Satan has in hindering man in doing the things for God. Daniel prayed for three weeks and the evil forces were so mighty that it took that length of time for the angel to reach him and answer his prayers. There are unseen evil forces; therefore, we need on the whole armor of God and the sword of the Spirit, that we may be able to stand in this evil day.

Ver. 19. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying (rejoicing)? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

The Apostle does not mean in any way to counterbalance his former presentation to the Christians by anticipating any reward from their conversion but because he hopes to meet all these redeemed ones in glory. He calls them his joy, because he would rejoice with them in their final salvation, or final glorified redemption. He calls them the crown of glory-

ing or rejoicing, because he regarded them as trophies of the victory of the Gospel which he preached (Phil. 4:1).

Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord? Are not ye, as well as other Christians present with Christ? We hope then on your account to have some great experience at the return of the Lord. We shall then be able to rejoice over you at His coming. We will then be able to parade with you as one parades with the crowned ones in the contest of games. We must keep the coming of the Lord at all times before our eyes if we are to be like-minded with the Apostles. In the Gospel the Lord's coming shines in upon us so near that it already affords us much light for our feet at every step.

Ver. 20. For ye are our glory and our joy.

This verse gives us a very practical lesson, not only about the coming of the Lord, but what our aim should be to get ready for His coming. The Apostle emphasizes the fact that these members of the church whom he has gained will be joy and glory to him at His coming. Christian parents and Christian ministers ought to be in a position to say, when He comes, "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." This implies that Paul would know his converts at Christ's coming. Our constant prayer and labor should be that all who are dear unto us shall appear in that happy company at last, that not one shall be wanting. The Apostle puts the Thessalonians in mind that while he has been hindered, and may continue to be hindered, yet we all believe in the coming of the Lord and nothing will be able to hinder his coming. This is the second time in this Epistle that the Apostle emphasizes the return of the Lord as an incentive to greater service and loyalty to the Word of Truth.

QUESTIONS

How long had Paul been absent from the Thessalonian Church?
 What was he doing at Corinth while writing this letter?
 Who gave Paul word concerning the condition of the Church?
 How did Satan hinder Paul?

In what way were these Thessalonians the hope of the Apostle?

In what sense did the Thessalonians believe in the coming of the Lord?

III. Lessons on Sanctification and Holiness, 3:1-13

The Apostle, no longer able to repress his longing and anxiety for the Thessalonians, resolved to be left at Athens alone and sent Timothy for the purpose of exhorting them to endurance amid their persecution, and to bring him information concerning their condition.

1. TIMOTHY'S MISSION TO THESSALONICA, 3:1-5

Ver. 1. Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone.

"Wherefore; on account of my affections toward you and my repeated attempts to see you." The Apostle was exceedingly anxious about conditions knowing the tremendous opposition against the Church in that wicked city. "We thought it good. We became reconciled to undergo separation from our associates, even here in Corinth where we have little help and much hindrance in order to get the desired information from you beloved disciples." Paul had come to Athens alone and waited for Silas and Timothy (Acts. 17:14-15). They are again with him here at Corinth (Acts. 18:5).

Ver. 2. And sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the Gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.

Paul is at this time working in a city where many people needed to know the Gospel, and is opposed by Jewish legalism and even driven out of the synagogue. This gives us some idea of what men of conviction had to meet in establishing churches in cities where Jews opposed Christ and the Gospel. Paul calls Timothy his brother and God's minister. They were laborers together with God (1 Cor. 3:9). Timothy had labored with Paul and Silas in publishing the Gospel at Thessalonica and therefore was well acquainted with the members. He was

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sent for the purpose of comforting and establishing them more firmly in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a testing time and the Apostle is very much concerned that they stand firm for Christ in the midst of this severe persecution.

Converts are to be established through the teaching of the Word of God. The best time to do this is when they accept Christ, to follow up immediately with a course of instruction that will increase their knowledge in the books Christ has given us for this age of grace. Elders, ministers, and Sunday-school teachers, must know the Word as Paul and Timothy knew it in order to establish and strengthen the faith of new converts.

Ver. 3. That no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed.

This verse contains the object of the exhortation that not one of these converts at Thessalonica be moved from the position in which they were placed by this affliction. There were great tribulations brought upon these people. Paul says, these Thessalonians knew and it is not necessary for Paul to tell them that Christ, the Head of the Church had to suffer and die, and that those who are His through faith are also appointed to suffering as well as to glory. Whatever may be claimed by the Jews that prosperity is the promise of the Old Testament, the early Church experienced that affliction which was the promise and experience in the New. All who have Christ incarnate have the Christ Spirit in suffering. "Ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). When the Apostle was called and became a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he was told how great things he must suffer (Acts 9:16).

Ver. 4. For verily when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

The Apostle assigns the reason why the Christian should not be moved by the affliction brought upon him. The tribulation and persecution was the result of Divine purpose. These early

Christians were appointed by God to meet the persecution of the world. God did something that was unknown unto man; he gave the Spirit of forgiveness of one who is himself righteous and suffers from those who are unrighteous that he may help them into righteousness. The persecution referred to here which was prophesied did come and that very speedily (Acts 17:5).

Ver. 5. For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.

The Apostle was anxious to know their Spiritual condition. They were exposed to the tempter and in danger of being led into apostacy. Through fear and endurance of persecution many in that early history as well as now, did not have their standing properly in the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore, were unable to hold out, in times of persecution. This was not so long after the revival and the beginning of this Church.

QUESTIONS

Where was Paul at this time and who was with him?

Why is he willing to be left at Athens?

What was Timothy's special mission to the Church?

Give the principal reasons for Paul's concern about these converts.

Who leads his opposing forces against Christians?

2. TIMOTHY RETURNS TO PAUL WITH GOOD NEWS, 3:6-10

Paul said he was willing to undergo sacrifice and even personal danger in order that his companion Timothy might visit the church and be the means of confirming their faith during the severe persecution through which the church was passing. Now Timothy has returned with good news which brings joy to his soul and increases his confidence in the keeping power of God.

Ver. 6. But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye

have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you.

Timothy and Silas joined Paul at Corinth and brought him information which was good news concerning the condition of the Church at Thessalonica. This brought joy to the Apostle because he recognized the fact that they were true to the faith and love as members of the Body of Christ. The Apostle in writing to the church after receiving these good tidings from Timothy expresses this joy and comfort in the faith he has in them as he continues this church letter. Their faith had not been shaken and their love had not waxed cold under the persecution to which they were exposed and they themselves expressed an earnest desire to see Paul and his associates as founders of the Church. This is encouraging to those who make sacrifice in preaching the Gospel to establish churches when they learn of the condition of the members as to faith and love. The affection between the Church and the founders was mutual.

Ver. 7. For this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction, through your faith.

In the midst of tribulations which had come upon them they were blessedly sustained and this gave confidence and cheer to the Apostle. Paul at this very time had sore afflictions himself. However, the good tidings from the Thessalonians refreshed his Spirit. As one separated unto the Gospel of God, he was so fully identified with those for whom he labored and whom he loved that he could say:

Ver. 8. For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord.

"We will enjoy life and grow spiritually, notwithstanding our afflictions and distress, if ye stand fast and continue firm in the faith of the Gospel." The steadfastness of others strengthens our own. In God's gift and work we find life. The Spiritual welfare of the church and the strength and joy of her ministers alike depend upon the Church's faith.

Ver. 9. For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.

The Apostle has been in communion with God in behalf of the members of this church and had thanked God for saving these souls. Now after hearing this good news, he feels that he could not render sufficient thanks to God for them, seeing what God is doing, building them up together in this holy faith. The Apostle gives prominence to the joy received in the spiritual welfare of others. We rejoice in the temporal prosperity of our friends, much more ought we to rejoice in their spiritual prosperity. John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear of my children walking in the truth." We ought to imitate the angels in heaven who rejoice at the repentance of the sinner. Great joy ought to come in our hearts when through God's power we rescue souls from hell and Satan.

Ver. 10. Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

The Apostle did everything in his power before God for the increase of faith and perfecting of the saints. He was in continued communication with God night and day. What is the prayer that goes up from the Apostle Paul unto God at this time? First, that they might be able to visit and see these disciples face to face which would bring joy and fellowship. Second, that in this way they might be able to perfect their faith and give their standing greater security before God. Faith and love have unbounded limits, when God is the source of both. The Scripture says, "Add to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge." The Apostle is absolutely under the direction of Him whom he serves and is therefore waiting for orders from Him that he might be the means of supplying that which is wanting in their faith. The privilege of personally visiting this Church was not enjoyed by the Apostle until a few years later. He remained for some time at Corinth because the Lord told him he had many people in that place who were in need of one that was separated unto the Gospel of God.

After leaving Corinth he went to Jerusalem and returned to Ephesus in Asia Minor where he founded and organized the Ephesian Church, and then made this long cherished visit to the Church to whom he is now writing.

QUESTIONS

Where was Paul when Timotheus returned from his visit to the Thessalonians?

What kind of tidings did Timothy bring?

Explain the meaning of "Now we live if ye stand fast in the faith."

What are the special things that Paul prayed for, night and day?

3. PRAYER FOR INCREASE IN HOLINESS AND FELLOWSHIP, 3:11-13

The Apostle believes that the next great thing that was to happen was the return of the Lord for His own. This was the blessed hope that made him willing to let go of material interests and undergo all kinds of persecution that at the coming of the Lord he might hear the favorable words from his master, "Well done good and faithful servant." That which he hoped to enjoy himself he longs for others to enjoy, and he is praying here that all might be so blessed through increase in fellowship and holiness that they might be watching and waiting for His coming.

Ver. 11. Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you.

The Apostle asks to be directed to this Church by those who called him and whose directions he followed during the three weeks when he reasoned to the Thessalonians out of the Scriptures. Here is a unity between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ by whom he is directed in his religious activities. We have the prayer directed to the Lord Jesus Christ which clearly shows a union of the Christ nature in himself and the Christ to whom he prays. The Apostle wishes to be directed so that he may very soon be present and in fellowship with the members of this Church.

Ver. 12. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you.

We have learned from the former verse that our journeys are not in our own power. Man may plan his way but God directs his going; for a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord. Our journeyings are not to be undertaken without God's will (James 4:13). In this verse the Apostle prays for the progressive sanctification of the members of the Church and their final perfection at the coming of the Lord. He asks the Lord to give this increase and to strengthen them in the bond of love. This is the way to true holiness. This no doubt is the character of Divine love. There was no doubt in the Apostle's mind that the Lord could do the things for which he asked in this verse. There were defects in their love as there were defects in their faith to be supplied from the inexhaustible source of all love. The objects of their love were, (a) one another—those of the household of faith who were to have the first place in their affections; (b) but all men likewise as children of a common father, for as we have opportunity we must do good unto all men (Gal. 6:10).

Ver. 13. To the end He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

The Apostle puts before the Lord a very definite thing as he communes with Him in prayer. He asks that believers hearts might be unblamable in holiness before God, the Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the third time the Apostle is emphasizing this great doctrine of the Early Church, "the return of the Lord." The Holy Spirit in giving us this Church Epistle takes us right to the throne, so that saving of souls and coming of the Lord is about all that one thinks about. When the Apostle closed the first chapter he speaks of the true characteristic of the believer to be that of waiting for Christ's return from Heaven. In the second chapter he again closes with the thought of the gathering together

of the saints at the coming of the Lord. He speaks of the time of glory and the time of reward. This was the blessed hope of the Early Church. Those who are members of the Body of Christ are so united in holiness and fellowship that they are all the time asking for directions from the Head. How can they help but watch and wait for His return? "Be ye ready, for ye know not the day or the hour in which the Lord doth come." This was the incentive to purity and holiness in the Early Church. The same is true in every period of Church life. One day after another was looked forward to as the consummation or end and yet this did not in any sense lessen their interest in missionary activities but increased their willingness to sacrifice and serve, that at His coming they might be among the faithful watchers.

QUESTIONS

What special thing did Paul pray for? (Ver. 11).

In what were the members of the Church to increase?

Why be so established in the heart?

For whom was Paul and the Church looking?

When Christ returns who will be with Him?

IV. The Model Walk and the Blessed Hope, 4:1-18

In this chapter the Apostle begins to emphasize more definitely the Christian's state and walk. He calls our attention to the practical things of the Christian life. He sees the great need of that increase of faith and holiness necessary to set forth before the world the Christ in whom they believed, who is so wonderful in bestowing righteousness and gifts of which the world knows nothing. He warns the disciples that they must not allow themselves to be led away with excitement in thinking of the Lord's return, but with quietness and honesty perform their duties to the saved and unsaved, so the Gospel will be set forth by the believers through the Holy Spirit in a powerful, convincing manner to the unbelieving world.

1. CHRISTIAN PROGRESS, 4:1-2

Ver. 1. Finally then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk, that ye abound more and more.

This introduces the practical part of the Epistle. It connects this exhortation with the closing verses of the last chapter. He prayed that the Lord would open the way by which he might visit this Church and that the Lord would increase the love and bond of union that they might be established unblamable in holiness before God. These Christians ought to be able to do their part and to do it well, so that the right influence of the Christian life might be felt by the unsaved.

"Exhort you by the Lord." They were all in fellowship and therefore, Paul has great anxiety as to the walk manifested by the disciples. He writes as the agent sent forth by the Lord Jesus Christ. You know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus. He here calls their attention to his exhortation based upon the Word of God during the three weeks of his residence among them. He wants these people to have an eye on God so that He may be pleased with their walk. God sets no bounds to the communion of His grace and Spirit to they who are faithful. There are no bounds to grace, and there should be none to the exercise in grace. No man can ever feel that he loves God too much or that he loves man too much for God's sake. The Apostle has great confidence in these disciples, and knows that they walk as Christians, but he also realizes the fact that there is something yet within which, if brought to the power of God, would make them abound more and more.

Ver. 2. For ye know what charge (commandment) we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

The Apostle appeals to their memory in confirmation of what he had said. The charge or commandments that he gave them were not his except to deliver. These are the things that came directly from the Lord who is the all truth; and when

the Apostle gives what he received from the Lord to deliver then the Lord is back of these commandments because they are His own. Here we have an illustration of what inspiration is. The Apostle received and gave from the Lord. The minister of the Gospel that receives and gives from the Lord is an inspired teacher. He has a message for the unsaved, not his message, but the Lord's.

QUESTIONS

By whom does the Apostle exhort the Thessalonians?
 What were the commandments given by the Apostle?
 Where did Paul get the commandments that he gave?

2. THE WILL OF GOD, THE RULE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE, 4:3-8

The Apostle had prayed for increase of fellowship and holiness that at the coming of the Lord we might be found well-pleasing unto Him. God sent his Son to give His life that we might be saved. The Apostle Paul is all the time trying to help the Christian know and understand just what God did for us in order that we might be in Christ and Christ in us. The more we know of what God did for us the more we will try to do what he says in His Holy Word. God delighteth not in outward obedience as He doth in obedience to His voice and will. The Christian prayed, "Thy will be done."

Ver. 3. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication.

God is able to save and to destroy. The will of God, therefore, has two significations in the Scripture: The one a determination to punish all who will not accept His Son through faith, the other to give eternal life and eternal inheritance to those who are obedient. The will of God is our sanctification. He willeth that all men should be saved. But salvation is possible only through sanctification, for "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Sanctification is the separation from all that is evil. Christ is our sin offering and through our acceptance of Him as our substitute we are saved. Christ is our

burnt offering, and through our acceptance of Him we become sanctified, holy dedicated unto the Lord who bought us and separated from that which is not holy. This means a gradual confirming of the human will to the blessed will of God. Christ, therefore, is our sanctifier. "Ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). The Apostle is writing to those who had been among the unconverted heathen,^a and are now numbered with the disciples of Christ. In coming into this new experience it is necessary for the Apostle to speak to them very plainly and solemnly concerning practices among the heathen that ought not to be known and named among the disciples of Christ. The heathen do not stand in any sense related to the will of God as do those who are representatives of Him by His Son. If the will of God is our sanctification, sanctification involves purity. "The pure in heart shall see God." The Lord Jesus through the Apostle Paul gives this much needed command to the Church which shows the change that should come over those who come out of darkness into the light of Christ.

Ver. 4. That each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor.

Interpreters are not fully agreed as to what the Apostle means in this verse. By some it is simply a figurative expression for wife. That every man use his wife for the purpose alone for which God created her and instituted marriage. Peter calls the wife, "The weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7). Others believe that the Apostle has reference to the body of individual believers. The body is the vessel in which the soul dwells (2 Cor. 4:7). In this same sense the Apostle uses this in writing to the Romans. However, this is admitted by all, that purity and continency must be observed whether it refers to the wife or to the husband as the following verses sufficiently prove. It is well that everyone obtain the mastery over his own body, which mastery is his thorough regeneration. In this way he comes out of the old into a new nature which

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gives him the power to keep his body for holy and sanctified purposes.

Ver. 5. Not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles which know not God.

We could not expect unregenerate Gentiles to know the result of this life as the regenerate who are born again, and know God. The moral sense of the heathen was so perverted and their nature so corrupt that they looked upon this as a thing of indifference. Ignorance of God is the fountain of impurity (Rom. 1:24).

Ver. 6. That no man transgress and wrong (defraud) his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified.

Paul said that fornication is contrary to sanctification, and therefore, contrary to the will of God. Now he goes on to say that it destroys brotherly love; that uncontrolled passion has destroyed and injured the rights of a brother. From the context it would appear that the Apostle meant to say that no man should by any means endeavor to corrupt the wife of another or to alienate her affections from her husband. The Lord is the avenger and will punish all those who defraud and are guilty of such sinful practices. The Apostle spoke before of the warning that he had received from the Lord concerning these sinful practices, therefore the Lord takes up here the case of the injured husband and all similar vices he will similarly punish. Every species of uncleanness was practiced among the heathen, who living themselves in such corrupt practices, did not consider them vices. The Christian religion not only discountenances these things but forbids them under the most awful penalty, therefore, wherever Christianity prevails, these vices, if they remain at all, are forced to seek the deepest gloom of midnight to cover them from the eyes of men.

Ver. 7. For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification.

God, the creator of male and female and the author of marriage, has called men and women into this sacred union

of which He is the author. God does not call men to uncleanness but unto holiness.

Ver. 8. Therefore, he that rejecteth (despiseth), rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth His Holy Spirit unto you.

What is rejected is either the above commandment to moral purity, or the Christian's calling to holiness, or Paul himself as the agent in bringing things of God unto man. In doing this, man as the agent of God has no commandment of his own to be rejected and therefore rejects God who is the giver of these commandments. Peter said to Ananias "Thou hast not lied unto man but unto God" (Acts. 5:4). In doing this you must recognize the difference between rejecting that which is human and that which is Divine. The author of these commandments is also responsible for the gift of the Holy Spirit unto the believer. It is no wonder that the Apostle asserts in the strongest and plainest terms that he is under the leadership and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was given for the express purpose of sanctification, to bring about holiness which is contrary to uncleanness and impurity. Herein is the climax of this exhortation. The Christian man has no excuse when he is in possession of commandments that have come to him direct from God, and a sanctified body for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. You see how God has made provision that all of us may live sanctified and holy lives.

QUESTIONS

How is God's will our sanctification?

What reasons are given to abstain from fornication?

Unto what has God called us?

Men who engage in the vices named here, rejected whom?

What does the Holy Spirit produce in the Christian's life?

3. GOD IS LOVE, AUTHOR OF THE LAW OF LOVE, 4:9-12

The Church of God is the school of love and God himself known as the great teacher. He teaches us by His example.

God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son. The Son of God loved men and gave himself for men.

Ver. 9. But concerning love of the brethren, ye have no need that one write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

This is the love of Christian to Christian, the special affection which believers bear to one another, a virtue which was carried to such a perfection in the primitive Church as to call forth the admiration of their heathen adversaries. The Apostle no doubt had intended to write to the Church especially on this topic of brotherly love, but on account of the report that he had received from Timothy finds it unnecessary to give any more attention to this subject which they so fully understand and practice. These early disciples were under God's instructions. The Holy Spirit dwelling in these sanctified temples was continuously teaching that which was from God. Brotherly love is a part of every regenerate nature, a spiritual instinct which does not need further instruction by the Apostle because so fully instructed by God.

Ver. 10. For indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more.

This God taught love cannot be limited to those persons abiding in Thessalonica, but to all the brethren in Macedonia. God considers them all as children of his and all the churches in Christ makes one glorious body (Eph. 3: 1-9). The Apostle feels that this progress in brotherly love will always be needed in the Church that there might be an increase in purity, righteousness and holiness.

Ver. 11. And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands even as we charged you.

God means that the Christian should live in security and confidence in Him who has called him. Live in peace. Worldly ambition excludes quietness and promotes restlessness. Paul's admonition is that "you do the things that God has laid upon your heart, and do them under His direction." That which

generally disturbs the peace of the Church is not political but religious. The members did not fully understand the meaning of the blessed hope and right relation to the return of the Lord. Many have brought reproach upon this very important doctrine by teaching that which the Scriptures do not warrant. This seems to have been the trouble in this Church. They made disturbance through a neglect of their ordinary business and thus brought an influence to bear against those who ought to be saved. Instead of intensely working for the saving of men and the increase of holiness and righteousness, they became indifferent and idle. This is the reason for the command to study and to work with their own hands. The Apostle Paul gives a similar exhortation to the Church at Ephesus, "Let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good." All should work and not become a burden to the Church of God. Idle persons, however smooth they may talk and fluently they may pray, cannot be Christians. They are hypocrites and deceivers. All true members pray and work.

Ver. 12. That ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.

The Christian walk should be dignified and becoming as members of the Body of Christ so that the right influence might go forth in the community. The Christian must always think of those who are unconverted, Jews and Gentiles who are in the unbelieving world. The Apostle says, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (Col. 4:5). Of all persons the Christian should so pray and work that it might not be necessary to ask assistance, either from the heathen or fellow-Christians. The Apostle means that these material things of which the world thinks so much about should in no way be used by the Christian to destroy his influence with the unregenerate. God is the source of all wealth and the Church is the redeemed body of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, God is her keeping power, able to enrich her with the gifts that are needed to carry forward her mission in the world.

QUESTIONS

Why was it not necessary for Paul to write concerning brotherly love?

Who was their great teacher?

What does Paul say about the love of these Christians?

Is there any unrest now that needs to be quieted and how?

Why does Paul emphasize, "working with your hands?"

4. THE COMING OF THE LORD TO GLORIFY THE SAINTS, 4:13-18

In the Early Church the Disciples did not fully understand what would happen to those who died before the coming of the Lord, so the Apostle is giving words of comfort to those who are mourning the death of their friends. These words contain one of the great revelations of the Bible and require, therefore, a positive statement as to the blessings for those who are with Him when he comes and those who are still on the earth and will be translated at His coming. Their views as to the nature and time of the advent and of the future state in general, were confused. They expected that Christ would come immediately and establish His kingdom on earth, consequently they feared that those who had died would be excluded from the blessings of the kingdom.

Ver. 13. But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope.

The Apostle uses this phrase frequently when he makes a transition to a new and important subject (Rom. 1:13; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1). The death of believers in the New Testament is frequently called sleep. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" (John 11:11). When Stephen was stoned it was said, "he fell asleep" (Acts. 7:60). It was the common epitaph on the tombstones of the early Christian. It is to be observed that it is not of the dead generally that the Apostle speaks but of the believers in Christ, and especially those members of the Thessalonian Church who died. When our friends die we are not to sorrow for them as those do who sorrow for the persons

who have not accepted Christ as their redeemer. Why should we thus sorrow for those who know Christ and have the blessed hope of His coming and of a glorified Body after the resurrection? The tears of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus have authorized and sanctified Christian sorrow. It is all right to sorrow when earthly ties are broken, to grieve for those whom we know are regenerated and are included in the resurrection of the dead. The heathen are not in possession of this blessed hope. They have no hope of immortality. The heathen even have very little hope of the future life. They mourn after the death of their friends as an irreparable loss. One of the great things the Apostle Paul was concerned about after he became separated unto the Gospel of God was that he might know the power of the resurrection.

Ver. 14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.

Our resurrection depends upon the belief that Jesus Christ died on the cross, that He was buried, and that He arose again; and now through His life we receive our life and our inheritance. The Apostle's argument proceeded on the supposition that Christ and the believers are one Body, of which Christ is the Head and the believers are the members, and therefore what happened to the Head must happen to the members. Our knowledge and belief of the future state is founded on the resurrection of the Head or Christ Himself (1 Cor. 15: 12-20).

"Even so then." Those who had faith in Christ Jesus members of the Body of Christ, who now sleep in Jesus since their physical death, will God bring with Him. They are now with Jesus and when Jesus comes they will come with Him. It is through Jesus that the believer falls asleep. We have been changed from the Adamic nature into the new nature of Christ Himself, and when separated at death, we go to Him, remain with Him, and when He comes we come with Him, as members of His body.

Ver. 15. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord,

that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede (prevent) them that are fallen asleep.

The Apostle emphasizes the fact that what he is saying here is fully in harmony with the Word of God. He does not have anything to say Himself nor has the Holy Spirit anything to say for Himself but just what the Lord tells them they reveal concerning the great facts of His coming and the blessing to be enjoyed by all the members of His body. We can be assured that the Apostle does not refer to the last discourses of the Saviour recorded in the Gospels nor the sayings of God preserved by tradition, but a new and direct revelation given by the Lord Himself so the saints might in no sense have any doubt of being in the Lord, no matter if they are with Him now in glory or on the earth at His coming. We know from the Word of God that Paul was one through whom He made known the secrets of His will. This puts Christ back of what Paul says and we should accept what Paul says as Christ's Word. Here are the words of Christ. Will you let the Holy Spirit help you hear His voice?

"That we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." The Apostle here means anyone who may be living at the time of the Lord's return. The Scripture is silent concerning the definite time when the Lord will return. The Apostle, however, included himself among the Thessalonians and emphasizes anyone in this age of grace who is living at the time that the Lord Jesus shall come.

Jesus says, "Watch and pray for ye know not the time." The Lord's return may be immediate, may be any moment, and we are expected to be ready, not only ready but watching and waiting for His return. Those who are living and remain are distinct from those who sleep or have gone before. Paul says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51). Christ and the Apostles taught the immediateness of the event. The Scripture everywhere teaches the same, "that in an hour when ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Jesus said, "I will come again and receive you unto myself

that where I am ye may be also" (John 14:3). This was a simple announcement that He would come again and receive those who are His to Himself. He did not say a word about the manner of that coming and how He would receive His own into glory to be with Him. No definite revelation had been given the Church concerning this glorious coming until we have it here in this chapter. As to the manner of His coming and concerning those who had already fallen asleep and their relation to that event, they were in ignorance. What a great comfort it has been to the Church in all ages that the Lord answered, through the Holy Spirit and the Apostles, the question of these sorrowing ones. No wonder the Apostle closes by saying, "Comfort one another with these words." The Apostle believed as well as all Christians who knew and believed the Word of God, that Christ might return at any time and that he might be among those living ones who would see Him at his coming. Because the Lord did not come, in no sense weakened the faith of the Disciples because they had the promise of being with Him and returning with Him at His coming. The expectation of the coming of the Lord was a part of the doctrine and belief of the early Disciples, an incentive to purity and holiness. The Early Church believed that individually they were members of the Body of Christ and as a Body could not bear to be long separated from the Head. This is the revelation that Christ has given unto the Church. If we believe it and live in it, it becomes a part of us and will produce stability, purity, and holiness as we are nearing the morning of His coming.

Christ tells us that when He comes for His saints, those who have fallen asleep will not have an inferior place and that we the living ones, who remain to the coming of the Lord, will not precede them. When Paul wrote these words "we the living who remain," he certainly included himself in that class. The two companies who are to be glorified by resurrection at His coming are those who have fallen asleep and those who are living; they are mentioned here for the first

time. Just how this is to be done is further set forth by the Lord who is to do it.

Ver. 16. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

The Lord Himself will descend from Heaven. After Christ rose from the dead He was on the earth about forty days proving Himself to be a living Saviour among the saints. He then took His departure from the Mount of Olives and went to the right hand of God in glory crowned with honor and majesty. Ever since His ascension He has been exercising His priesthood and making intercession in behalf of His people, by which He strengthens, perfects, and keeps those who are His. When the age of grace has come to a close and the last member has been added to the Church as His Body, that Body which is to be with Him in glory at his own right hand, He will leave the place that He now occupies at God's right hand and descend from Heaven with a shout. The meeting place for Him and His saints will be in the air and not on the earth. When He comes with His saints in His visible manifestation, then is the time that He will descend to the earth.

He descends with a shout, a commanding shout as that of a leader to His hosts when he leads them into battle. He comes at the head of an army of redeemed souls. This army is not going forth to battle under this captain at this time, but He has come for the purpose of uniting His forces, those who are with Him in glory and those on the earth. They return with Him into glory to make ready, however, for a later conflict when Christ will ride on the white horse with this united army, going forth to conquer and subdue all who have been and will be disobedient unto the Will of God. What words are used in this command or shout, we do not know. We who are looking for Him and they who are with Him would be glad to hear the word, "Come." The disciples that were with John the Baptist at the River Jordan when Jesus returned after his temptation in the wilderness, heard John say "Behold

the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The two disciples came and asked Jesus, "Where dwellest thou?" Jesus said, "Come and see." These same words would be welcome words to hear from the Master's lips when He comes to unite and glorify through resurrection His saints.

When Christ comes for His own there will also be the voice of the arch-angel (Michael) and the trump of God. Michael, the arch-angel is the leader of angelic hosts. The arch-angel will be with Him in His descent out of heaven into the air to unite His Body at the time of this glorious return. All Heaven is interested in the work of redemption. We are told of the joy that is known in Heaven when one soul is redeemed and added to the Church, the Body of Christ. This is the time that all sinners, saved by grace, are brought with glorified bodies into the holy, glorified family of God. The teaching of Jesus here, helps us to understand that there is a great difference between the graves of the redeemed and unredeemed. This glorious coming forth at this time will be enjoyed only by the redeemed. Such being the teaching of our Master it behooves us who are sinners saved by grace, separated unto the Gospel of God, to be active in the mission that Christ has given us in calling men out of darkness into light that they might come into possession of that which is to be enjoyed at the event of the first resurrection.

Ver. 17. Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Those saints who are still working on the earth for the Master shall be changed, transfigured and made immortal. They shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. We are saved by the power of God; saved by grace, not by works, lest any man should boast. We stand justified before God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died and by the power of God was brought forth into life. Then at the beginning of our new and glorious life we were made such through the supernatural power of God. If we remain on

the earth at the coming of the Lord, God's power will be so gloriously manifested that the physical body within which we are then living will be miraculously changed and we will come in possession of an immortal and glorified body. Our hearts go out in gratitude to God for what He did in bringing us into fellowship with Himself and the saints, and what He promises to do for us to complete us for glory. All of what God is telling us about coming into fellowship and glory, is beyond man's reason and intelligence and we accept through faith the sayings of Him who knoweth all things. This is what Jesus Himself reveals unto us, He is the creator of the world, holds all things in the power of His hand, and therefore is able to do everything for us beyond our own thoughts and reason. It behooves us therefore to accept unreservedly all that He teaches because it has back of it the authority and power of God.

Ver. 18. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Apostle meant that the information concerning those who die and those who are alive, should bring comfort to the members here on earth. We are to receive comfort from these words. Much depends upon who speaks the Word as to the comfort they can gain. These comforting words are the words of Jesus. We are told here that all who receive Christ by faith will not only have Christ to abide with them now, but will abide with Him later with all redeemed in glory. Are not these words of wonderful comfort when we carry the body of our loved ones to the home of the dead and lay them away? We look at their graves as different graves from those of the unregenerate. These graves are to be opened and the redeemed come forth in glorified bodies. The Master's words are comforting because they tell us that upon His return these graves will be disturbed, while other graves will be undisturbed. It makes no difference how these graves may be sealed or guards placed about them, they will be opened by the same power that opened the grave of Jesus and brought Him forth, and those within will come forth with new bodies as He came forth. If you want comfort from these words you must be

willing to obey the Christ, receive Him as your Saviour, work for Him and talk for Him, help others to know Him as their redeemer, and if you continue faithful in the mission that he gives you, these words will be a comfort to you when you lay away loved ones who have been redeemed, and they will be a comfort to you whether you have passed through death or are still living at the return of the Lord.

QUESTIONS

What was the ignorance that Paul referred to in the Thessalonian Church?

What ignorance is there in the Christian world on this subject?

Is it wrong to sorrow at the departing of our loved ones?

Whose words are these used by the Apostle?

Who is Christ to bring back with Him at His coming?

What about those who are living when Christ comes?

Do the Scriptures teach that some men never die?

Tell what comfort you get from the words?

V. The Lord's Day and the Unbelieving World, 5:1-28

The last letter written by the Apostle Paul gives warning to all of the danger of misapplying the truth of God and being guilty of wrongly dividing the Word of Truth. All who will listen and take God at His Word are in no danger of being misled. God had spoken in the previous chapters concerning the resurrection of the righteous dead and the translation of the living saints upon the earth at the same time, the living and the dead, being forever with the Lord. He closes the chapter with this expression, "Comfort one another with these words." In this chapter the Apostles make clear to the Church concerning Scripture that had been given before that ought not to be confused with the revelation contained in the previous chapter.

1. THE DAY OF THE LORD, 5:1-11

The Apostle in these verses emphasizes the fact that there was no need for instruction in that which the Scripture had so

fully set forth before. He gives a number of reasons for this in the following verses.

Ver. 1. But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you.

The Christians were in the light and by remaining there, they would be able to lead others into it. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. The Word of God contained the necessary information concerning the plan of God for the future, in which is sufficient revelation for the Church of God, the Body of Christ, that she should not be taken unawares at any time. However, she must exercise watchfulness and be armed with faith, love, and hope, knowing that God has not appointed her unto wrath but that God will bring about in due time all the blessings promised her in His word. Paul here is speaking by inspiration guided by the Holy Spirit in this information about what the Word of God contained concerning the blessings for the Christian Church and what it contained concerning the day of the Lord or the Lord's Day, soon to come forth upon all as a thief in the night. He gives a number of reasons why no additional information is needed upon this important subject.

(1) First reason, 2-6.

Ver. 2. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

This is the day when the Lord is revealed from Heaven, the day of His visible manifestation. It is the time when judgment will be executed upon the world. The day of the Lord of which the Apostle now writes is fully revealed by the prophets and for that reason the Apostle says, "Ye brethren know perfectly." That was not true concerning the coming of the Lord, for His saints as made known to us through revelation by the Apostle Paul in the former paragraph. This was a new revelation not revealed in the Old Testament. The Day of the Lord will begin with the removal of the Church and the ending of man's day or man's judgment as presented in 1 Corinthians (4:3). Man's judgment now prevails every-

where. This is the time when man is working out things according to his own judgment and it is the time marked by the absence of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the day in which man is speaking and God is silent. Man is having his time of authority and God is holding His peace. God has spoken. He had His say. He last spoke when man murdered His blessed Son, whom He gave to redeem man. God now leaves man to himself either to obey or to disobey. Man plans to regenerate the world. He puts forth civilization and reformation to be substituted for that which God says man needs, which is regeneration. Man believes that through the education of the physical and intellectual he can reach the very best there is for man to enjoy. We see his schemes for education and reform which the world has ample time to test. Now in this age of grace God, having made such wonderful provisions to redeem and save man, is sitting in the Heaven silent but as the Scripture says, laughs at those who tread beneath their feet His methods and words. They are under His wrath and He laughs at their man-made efforts for improvement. In this age of wordliness and modernism, God is silent but he tests His people's faithfulness. The Son of God's last words were "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." Man's day will end. The rapture of the Church as described in the fourth chapter will bring an end to man's judgment or man's day.

The Lord's Day. There are many passages of Scripture that set forth what is meant here by the Apostle (Isa. 2:12-20; Joel 2-3; Zeph. 1:14-18; Zech. 14:1-9). Jesus in the Four Gospels speaks frequently of that day as, "The day when the Son of Man cometh." That is, in His own glorious manifestation. That which precedes this day is also made known by the prophets of the Old Testament. Then the Lord Himself gave us words to confirm what the prophets had said, "And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars—and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:25-27). Judgment is in store for the world when that day comes. The

Bible speaks of judgment and tribulation which are the fore-runners of the Lord's day. The professing church is almost silent concerning the coming of this day, but the voice of God still speaks; however, the cry of the world saying "Peace and safety" has such an influence upon the professing Christian world even, that she almost ceases to believe or even to listen to the Lord's voice.

"So cometh as a thief in the night." The thief makes his appearance at a time when he is least expected. He comes in the stillness of the night when all are asleep. Just because certain things did not happen immediately we begin to lose faith in the thing that God says and question whether it will ever happen. This was true in the Early Church when some began to doubt the Word of God and began saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4). People are asking the same question in this advanced age of education and civilization, in this age when we have so clearly and emphatically set forth in God's revealed book the things concerning the rapture of the Church and the Day of the Lord. By perverting the Scriptures, the Church is in confusion and many are brought into a false hope and false optimism. No matter what God says and has done, yet humanity believes in peace and safety to be brought about by an unregenerate world. Just as the thief comes during the time when people are asleep and unprepared so in a similar manner, Christ will find an unprepared world not expecting a fulfilment of the teaching of the Word of God and the coming of the Day of the Lord.

Ver. 3. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape.

This tells us that when the unbelieving world shall have gained such an influence and cry for peace and safety, deceiving us through belief of internal rest and external security, God all the time is saying, "Sudden destruction cometh upon them."

The Scripture says, at such times there is the greatest danger. It is the time when they are most off their guard, that the crisis approaches. God has clearly revealed unto His children that such a crisis should not come upon them unawares.

“As travail upon a woman with child.” This figure is perfectly consistent with what the Apostle has said before, that the times and seasons were not just definitely known, but sure to come to pass. As labor cometh upon a woman suddenly, so sudden destruction comes upon the unregenerate world which shall not escape.

Ver. 4. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

The brethren, the disciples of Christ, are not among those who are crying peace and safety. The Apostle's words here are encouragement to those who know the Scripture and believe that God is able to do what he says. The Church is in such a position by Divine right that she need not fear that day coming upon her as a thief. If the Church were in darkness as the world is then there might be reason to fear. By darkness is meant not merely ignorance concerning the teaching of the Word but moral depravity which comes through remaining under the power of sin. The redeemed Children who are in the Body of Christ and have Christ as their Head need not be surprised at the coming of the Lord's Day, because they are not in darkness, but in the light.

Ver. 5. For ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness.

This tells the Christian the class to which he belongs. If we are among the children of the day then we are among those who are able to see because we are in the light and the thing that we can see need not surprise us when it comes. The day being a period of light is opposite to that which is darkness and night.

Ver. 6. So then let us not sleep as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober.

We are the children of the light and of the day. We are in Christ who is light. We have been instructed in His Word. Therefore, we are enlightened and able to have our eyes opened so we can watch and be sober, and need not be unprepared for the Lord's day. Before this day comes the Lord will have already come for His saints. The world and those who are Christians only in name, and make a hollow profession, will be overtaken by this day of the Lord, and God's true children, the praying people, will have been removed by the Lord into glory. It will be a time when the world will join hands with professing believers and will take a final plunge into apostacy and iniquity. This is all confirmed by the Word of God. Then there will be judgment upon judgment from above poured out. Tribulation and judgment will be the forerunners of His visible manifestation. The times and the seasons referred to as the Apostle Paul says, do not concern those who are the Lord's.

Jesus had told His disciples before he left them on the Mount of Olives that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons (Acts 1:7), or when the time of the Gentiles will end, but to wait and watch for Him, "who will come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven" (Acts 1:11). The Christians, during this age of grace, are instructed to wait and watch that when the bridegroom comes they may be prepared. We must not confuse the coming of the Lord for His saints and the coming of the Lord with His saints to take vengeance upon all those who know not God. The world has rejected her King and will be judged because she believed that through the man of sin she would secure her salvation. It is the power of this man of sin that deceives those who are under them and makes them cry, "Peace and safety."

(2). The second reason, 7-8.

Ver. 7. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night.

The night is the season in which sleep and drunkenness usually occur while the day is the season of watchfulness, sobriety and work. The heathen and Jewish people generally

considered it a very disgraceful thing for a man to be seen drunken in the daytime. The unbelieving Jews accused the believers on the day of Pentecost of being filled with new wine. Peter answers this charge by saying, "We are not drunken as you suppose, seeing that this is but the third hour of the day" (Acts 2:15). The Christian, being no longer in darkness but a child of the light and of the day, and therefore, being wide awake, so that he is walking with the Lord when the Lord's day approaches, cannot be overtaken by that day. This is the promise of companionship to those who have joined the Lord as He goes forth in judgment upon the world during this period of darkness into which the world has been brought.

Ver. 8. But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

We are in the light. We are admonished to put on a breastplate of faith and love. Every doubt lurking about the Christian's heart ought to be removed. We are not only called to serve but we are also called to fight the good fight of faith, that by this faith and love we need never be surprised by the things which happen when we have our security through faith in Christ. We must not only be in possession of the whole armor in order to be able to stand secure, but we must be armed so that we may be able to conquer. The soldier must have protection for his heart and his head. This is what faith and love is to the Christian. Faith enables us to endure and see Him who is invisible; love excites us to diligence and activity, and makes us bear our troubles and difficulties pleasantly; hope helps us to anticipate the great end, the glory that we know shall be revealed in due time and which we shall "obtain if we faint not." The Apostle speaks of those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. They are not among those who watch and are sober. They walk in the way of the world, enjoy its lusts and pleasures; but the believer having on the breastplate of faith and love and for

a helmet the hope of salvation is always able to advance against the enemy.

(3). The third reason, 9-10.

Ver. 9. For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The human family is divided into two classes. We are either going to receive the judgment of God because of disobedience to His Word or through obedience to His Word He will set over to our account His righteousness and we will receive His own justification. Paul says, "God appoints us not unto wrath." Persons who are of the light and of the day, we are already told, are appointed by God before the foundation of the world. Those who are appointed to wrath are so because of the final rejection of Christ and His Gospel. Because the Jews rejected God's Son and put Him to death, He appointed them unto wrath, and elected the Gentiles and appointed them to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, however, by an individual acceptance, whether Jew or Gentile, that righteousness is obtained. A remnant of the Jews who continued faithful even in the dispersion and under a government of the Gentile world, became the favored of Israel while the Jewish nation, because of disobedience, has been set aside through a period of time, but at the close of this age of grace after completion of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ and the return of the saints into glory, God will again deal with the unfaithful Jewish nation.

Ver. 10. Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

It was Christ's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross that has set aside the course of the law and opened the way that God could justify the believer. Just through the death of one person is it made possible that all may come in peace and fellowship unto God. Here we have wonderful assurance given us that we are delivered from the

wrath to come and promised the privilege of sharing the eternal glory with Him who died to save us. The Apostle further emphasizes the unity and fellowship of believers with Christ the Head whether awake or sleep. Paul again refers to things that were not understood among the Thessalonians. He is talking about those who had died and those who are living; so, at the coming of the Lord the rapture of the saints, there will be really no difference between those who are alive and those who are asleep. Those who have died will come forth and those who live will be translated and be forever with the Lord and live together with Him.

Ver. 11. Wherefore exhort (comfort) one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do.

We shall be able to comfort one another and be a blessing to one another if we realize that we are permitted to live together with him in glory. All will share in the blessings of the Lord at his coming. The Apostle Paul in closing the former chapter, speaking about the blessings that the dead and the living shall receive when Christ comes, closes with the same words as he does in this paragraph, "Comfort one another with these words." Here he says "Comfort yourselves together." Edify one another, or build each other up. It was a favorite figure with the Apostle to compare the Christian Church and each individual believer to a building, "And edify one another, even as also ye do." Instructions were surely necessary to give to the living concerning those taken away by death, because the Thessalonian saints were ignorant as to just what would take place at death as the Church is now wonderfully ignorant because it has neglected the instruction given by the Lord Jesus. Some philosophers and even the Pharisees believed that no one died, death being merely life in another form, which seems to be the popular belief of the world. Many who hold this view set aside the seriousness of life and really deny the teaching of the Word of God and the necessity of resurrection. The Epicureans and Sadducees believed that death

was death and everyone died eternally as there was no hereafter. This of course denied the doctrine of the resurrection altogether. This was the view held in the world and by many in the professing church, and so no wonder they were ignorant in the Early Church and needed the instruction given by the Apostle. After all, everything depends upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. If we believe that He arose, then there is another great truth, that we believe, and it is built upon this great foundation. It is the belief in the hope of the resurrection and the coming of the Lord Jesus.

QUESTIONS

Why not write concerning times and seasons?

What was it that they knew perfectly?

What was meant by "Day of the Lord?"

NOTE: Instruction was necessary as to those who had been taken away by death. The Thessalonian saints were ignorant as to what takes place after death. This information concerning what is to happen on the other side of the grave and of those who are still living when Christ comes is made clear by God Himself in His Word as presented in the last chapter that we studied. It tells all that is to take place before the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is a period of time beginning after the rapture of the saints. This is the day when the Lord will be revealed from Heaven; the day of His visible manifestation. It is the day when judgment will be executed upon the earth. This is the day of the Lord of which the Apostle now writes which is fully revealed in the prophetic teaching, reference of which is given in the former verses. Jesus Himself, frequently spoke concerning that day as "the Day when the Son of Man cometh."

What does God's Word say about peace and safety, and who says it?

Who are the children of the light and why?

Give the three reasons why no instructions were needed concerning the day of the Lord.

For what has God appointed us?

What two classes are mentioned in Ver. 10?

Who are to be comforted together?

2. CLOSING EXHORTATIONS, 5:12-22

With this verse commences a new paragraph. The Apostle mentions a number of very important things appreciated and necessary in a Church that has reached the stage of spirituality as is manifested by these Thessalonian Saints. He speaks about the care and fellowship that ought to be shown towards those who labor in that which brings about greatest spirituality.

Ver. 12. But we beseech you, brethren, to know (acknowledge) them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.

The members of the Church are to appreciate and esteem those who have organized the Church and have been appointed overseers among them. Although the Church of Thessalonica had been so recently founded there were those who had been given the oversight of it. These persons were appointed to be over them in the Lord. This is the sphere in which they were set over the Church. They were ordained to administer, not only in sacred things, but also to be under Him, Christ, who is the builder of the Church. Paul here states very clearly that the bishop of the church is one who receives his orders from the Chief Bishop, Jesus Christ. We have been instructed that Christ is the Head of the Church and the members are the Body of Christ, so the true Bishop, knowing his standing in Christ and his true relation to all the members of the Body, can have but one aim which is to increase and perfect the Body of Christ.

Ver. 13. And to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Christian ministers who preach the whole truth and labor in word and doctrine are worthy of the very best from the Church. The Apostle commands them to be esteemed in love. Men delight to serve those whom they love and it necessarily follows that the message bearers for Christ should have such care that they want neither necessities nor conveniences of life. The Apostle says this ought to be done for their work's

sake. Those who sacrifice and work are worthy of the admonition given by the Apostle. The indolent, from this message, have no claim upon the Church. This charge is given on account of the importance of the work (Heb. 13:17) and the earnest and laborious manner in which it was performed (Phil. 1:22, 2:30).

"Be at peace among yourselves." This is a new exhortation entirely independent of the other just given. This is addressed to the members of the Church in general. Since the foes of peace are trying every heart such an exhortation was necessary even though there were no serious disagreements at the time. It is very important for the Church to have well in heart the truth presented in the foregoing Scripture, as to what God teaches concerning the living and the dead at the coming of Christ for His own. We know that we are therefore not to concern ourselves about times and seasons because when the day of the Lord comes, which is God's judgment day during the period of tribulation, the saints are with the Lord in glory. It is very important for the Church to know her privilege as to His coming and to be with the Lord during the period of extreme suffering and tribulation. This is what God teaches us through the Holy Spirit. Knowing the plan that God has for us, we will be wonderfully inspired as members of the Body of Christ in conquering the foe of our hearts and helping to establish peace among the people of God.

Ver. 14. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all men.

Those who are out of rank and disorderly are to be admonished. They do not fully know the word of Truth and are not sufficiently acquainted with the Founder of the truth to know the pleasure there is in fully following His instructions. There are always those in the church who are faint-hearted, who have not the courage to do even what they know is right. They become agitated because of the faith of their deceased friends, or they do not sufficiently comprehend the grace of

God and the power to set them fully free from sin. They are not to be reprimanded, but exhorted and comforted. There are those who need stronger faith and spiritual power to carry them forward unto victory. We have here the unruly, the feeble, and the weak, who will exercise our patience and try our temper. Patience is not only constantly to be cultivated but the Apostle shows us wherein it is to be exercised. The Christian life is compared to a warfare. Soldiers are trained in order to have the army united in making advancement against the foe, so the Christian must be trained that there may be a union among the strong and weak so that every advancement against the foe may result in victory. Christ who is the Captain knows just where to place the weak and strong in His army in order to accomplish the best results.

Ver. 15. See that none render unto any one, evil for evil, but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all.

Every temper contrary to love is contrary to Christianity. "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17). The Spirit of Christ and His Church is just the reverse of that which is in the world. Christ taught and practiced this while on earth and recommends that those who are His practice the same. We are taught to pursue only that which is good. This will promote the welfare of our brethren and neighbors, no matter to what nation they may belong. The Apostle goes further in his instruction than that of doing good to the members of the household or the members of the church, he emphasizes the truth that it is to the human race in general.

Ver. 16. Rejoice always (evermore).

We are informed in the previous verse that we are not to render evil for evil but to do good for evil. Now this verse tells us that we are to rejoice in doing good to those who do us evil. Christ says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

This command by the Master has always been found one among the most difficult to be obeyed. It can only be obeyed by those who have the spirit of Christ and understand the right position to the Christ or Head, with Christ's own spirit or new nature in them as members of His Body.

Ver. 17. **Pray without ceasing.**

The Christian is instructed here to make prayer continuous in his life. It means that in particular matters we are just to pray on until we succeed in the object of our request. Devotion is the best food of our souls which preserveth their life and health, repairs their strength and vigor, and if we long abstain from it, our souls will starve and pine away. Saints delight to talk to the Head of the Church. The men whom God used as agents to deliver His oracles were found much in prayer. The Psalmist prayed evening, morning, and noon (Ps. 119:164). Daniel prayed three times a day (Dan. 6:10). The followers of Christ, the members of His Body, living in a world of sin and iniquity, with the tempter in their midst all the time trying to pervert the Word of God, must be watchful and prayerful Christians.

Ver. 18. **In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward.**

The Apostle tells us here that we are to be so related to God through Jesus Christ that no matter what may happen, while dwelling in this body of flesh, whether in joy or in sorrow, we will always be in a spirit of thanksgiving. The Apostle encouraged the Romans by calling their attention to the unfailing purpose of God through the Gospel, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam. 1:17). Thanksgiving must be universal in its sphere. In Christ Jesus,

God revealed His will and made it effectual. God's mercies all reach us through the channel of this mediator.

In the last three verses we have three universal exhortations. It is natural that we should sometimes pray and rejoice and give thanks, but certainly it does not come naturally to us to be always doing these things, and after giving us these three universal exhortations, Paul says it is, "The will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward." The Christian is to be in perpetual rejoicing (Ver. 17), ceaselessly praying (Ver. 18), universal thanksgiving (Ver. 18). Those who exercise these three universal exhortations are in a position to understand the further exhortations in this paragraph.

Ver. 19. Quench not the Spirit.

There has always been a tendency in the Christian Church to limit spiritual utterance. We are told that it is possible to resist the utterances of the Spirit. God strives with men who may yet resist all his importunity (Acts 10:22). We may be guilty of insulting the Spirit of grace as believers. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17). We are taught by the author that the Christian is sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), and, therefore, has the authority and power of Heaven back of him. We are not only sealed but sealed to the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). Paul in writing his last message to his Spiritual son Timothy, says, "Stir up the gift that is within you." The Holy Spirit dwelling in our bodies which are his temples will use our hearts and our lips to testify of a crucified Christ who died to save all who would believe in Him. Many utterances of the Master are unheard by the world and the church because people are guilty of quenching the Spirit.

Ver. 20. Despise not prophesyings.

These were special manifestations of the spirit. We have more in these different Epistles written to the churches than simply the teaching of the Word of God through prophetic utterances. In these Churches there was also the presence of

miracles. This was all for the purpose of promoting union and power in the Church. Too many place a very low value on these important manifestations of God's power in the Early Church. Those who cannot feel and experience this power manifested in the Early Church are little used to bring about anything to show God's power in the period of the Church in which they live. There are Spiritual utterances in psalms and hymns for edification and exhortation and comfort to the believer, through which conviction may also be brought to the hearts of unbelievers. In all periods of the Church, there have been those who despised prophecy and the supernatural power of God and thus are among those who are guilty of perverting the truth and instead of giving strength are the cause of destroying faith in the prophecies of God.

Ver. 21. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

The Christian ought to be sufficiently familiar with the Word of God that he would be able to put to test all things by that Word. It is the Christian's duty at all times to be in a position to hear those who speak in the Spirit, and know that it is by the Spirit in order that faith and love might be increasing. In the study of these Epistles, we learn that the author had considerable trouble with prophets and teachers who professed to be of God and yet were not. When Paul says, "Prove all things" he knows that there is sufficient material given us in God's word by which to prove and test all those who are untrue to the teaching of the Master. It is not that we are to reject prophesying but we are to test by a due spiritual discernment, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are raving wolves." True doctrine is according to Godliness. We are instructed to hold fast that which is good. Christians must examine the ground of their faith. When you listen to those speaking by Spiritual gifts your faith is made stronger in the Word of God, your love grows for soul winning and you feel that you are making some

advancement in holiness and usefulness; then you have ground to believe that the person speaking is in possession of the new nature of Christ, and really under the influence and power of the Spirit of God that is not quenched.

Ver. 22. Abstain from every form (appearance) of evil.

We have been speaking of different forms of evil, practical and doctrinal. We are instructed here to abstain from every one of them. Many of these evils are not easily detected and Satan is able to so disguise error in a way that it is difficult to detect even by the believer unless he is conscious and in possession of the three universal exhortations presented in this paragraph. The danger is great, the enemy is awful in his power and malignity. We are to shun and hate all that comes from him. Whatever conflicts with the Word of God is evil, let it seem ever so obvious.

QUESTIONS

What three kinds of labor are spoken of in Ver. 12?

Give reasons for esteeming them very highly in love?

What exercises of the Christian's patience and endurance are presented in Ver. 14?

Can the Christian who is possessed with the Spirit of Christ render evil for evil?

How may the Christian be always happy?

When is he to pray?

Is it easier to quench the Spirit or to give the Spirit right of way?

What is prophesying and how can one despise it?

Explain the meaning of, "Hold fast that which is good."

3. CONCLUSION, 5:23-28

(1) Prayer for the Santification and Preservation of the Thessalonian Saints, 5:23-24

Here we have a prayer concluding this portion of the letter as we have a prayer in closing a former part (3:11-13).

Ver. 23. And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the prayer offered by the Apostle for these and all saints that they may enjoy what is here expressed at the coming of the Lord. The whole man is to be transformed, glorified, immortalized and be preserved entire, and presented faultless in the Father's presence with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24). The Apostle prays for this to happen at a specific and definite time. The prayer will not receive its full and eternal answer for all who are Christ's until the appointed time. The man of God here learns that the body is also included with his soul and spirit in sanctification. It is the instrument in which he lives and the Holy Spirit dwells and is to exercise in righteousness. The body, at the time of the resurrection, will be changed from mortality to immortality. The individual life of man is to be wholly sanctified. The Spirit is the higher aspect of life. The order is from the lower to the higher. Soul and spirit are words used interchangeably and yet are not equivalent when used in the same connection. Paul prays for the preservation of the saints and perfection at the coming of Christ for His body. God is the only one who can keep us. Jesus prays to the Father, "Keep them" (John 17). He not only asks the father to keep us from falling, but that we may be kept orderly before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. The saints are kept by his power through faith in salvation (1 Pet. 1:5). The Apostle has called our attention to the coming of the Lord in every chapter in this Epistle. A very definite and minute description is given in the fourth chapter concerning His coming and the blessings enjoyed by those who had died and those who were then living on the earth.

Ver. 24. Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it.

God's faithfulness is our guarantee. We know that He is not only faithful, but He has the ability and power to perform that which he has promised to all those whom He called. He is faithful to His oath, His promise, and His covenant. He is faithful in the calling of His son, so He is faithful to all those who are in fellowship with His son. Whom he calls he

justifies and glorifies. If He gives grace, He gives glory. These verses are very important lessons to the faithful follower of Christ. We are to be obedient and look to God and trust in His grace. It is God who giveth holiness. We are instructed here to pray for entire sanctification, body, soul, and spirit. All are God's; glorify Him in all.

(2). Three Closing Injunctions, 5:25-28

A. The Apostle Asks an Interest in the Prayers of the Thessalonians, 5:25

Ver. 25. Brethren, pray for us.

His request is proof of the Apostle's deep humility. At this time he is at Corinth preaching the Gospel, meeting opposition on every hand, and the Church at Thessalonica that he had founded and to whom he is writing this letter is also meeting with opposition from the heathen and Jews; realizing thus the need of God's guidance and power he asks the disciples that they might remember him as they commune with God in prayer. He was very anxious that the work that the Lord had given him might be successful, and that the Word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified. This is a usual request by the Apostle in all of his letters. He asks an interest in his behalf in the prayers of the disciples. Ministers, Sunday-school workers and laity all need each others prayers. Prayer is a duty which Christians owe to each other.

B. Exhortations for Christians to Salute Each Other, 5:26

Ver. 26. Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss.

The kiss, a general mark of salutation, was to be hallowed by the expression of brotherly love and of common joy in the Lord. Paul speaks of this four times and Peter once. The practice was universal in ancient times. It was associated with the holy communion. Eastern customs spring from Western customs. The salutation ought to express one's affection, and equality among the disciples of the church. Christianity puri-

fies and elevates worldly courtesy. This was the common Eastern form of salutation associated with religion.

C. Solemn Charge Concerning the Reading of the Epistle, 5:27-28

Ver. 27. I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren.

This is the first letter written by the Apostle to any Church. He writes this letter and gives them specific direction how to use it. He recognizes the right of all the brethren to read it and be instructed by it. His own instruction is by the Lord and so the instruction contained in this letter to the Churches is also by the Lord. This no doubt is the reason for this exhortation because the epistle contained the words of the Lord and just the instruction needed by the Church. This Epistle was not only read at Thessalonica but became a general Epistle for all the Churches and is now numbered with the Church Epistles for specific instruction.

Ver. 28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The letter begins with grace and closes with grace. The Christian life begins with the grace of Christ, continues with the grace of Christ, and closes with the grace of Christ. Here the Epistle closes by asking that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ might be continued with all the saints. Christ is a living Saviour and he is Divine. He is the divine Head of the Body, the Church. We look to Him all the time for continued blessing, not because of any merits from our good works, but only according to the evidence of the merit that He had and is willing for us to enjoy as ours.

QUESTIONS

Explain the meaning of "sanctify wholly."

In what way was the body to be sanctified?

What special thing does Paul mention in his prayer?

How are all saints to appear at Christ's coming?

How often is Christ's coming mentioned in this letter and in what connection?

- (1) The coming of Christ as the believer's expectation, 1: 1-10.
- (2) The coming of Christ as the believer's reward, 2: 1-19.
- (3) The coming of Christ as the believer's sanctification, 3: 1-13.
- (4) The coming of Christ as the believer's translation, 4: 1-17.
- (5) The coming of Christ and the Day of the Lord, 5: 1-28.

The Holy Spirit presents in the first chapter, a model Church; in the second, the model servant; in the third, the model brother; in the fourth, the model walk; in the fifth, entire sanctification.

Why did Paul ask that the Thessalonians might pray for him?

Why urge that the letter be read unto all the holy brethren?

Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

This second letter to the Thessalonian Church was written soon after the first. Paul uses the names of his companions in the first verse as he did in the first verse of the first epistle. Just how long after the first epistle was received by the Thessalonian Church until Paul sent the second letter cannot be correctly ascertained. Confusion had been brought into the Church by false teachers which made it necessary for Paul to write this second letter to the Church. The first epistle had been written to the converts to set forth clearly before them the blessed hope—the coming of the Lord. The confusion brought into the Church by these teachers did not affect the faith and love but it did chill and mar the hope that was held by this Church as presented in the first epistle (1:3). Paul called attention to their work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope. This work of faith was exemplified in the same chapter which showed the complete change of these converts turning from idols made by man unto the living and true God. These converts had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts and through this labor of love were serving the true and living God. They were being educated in patience. They believed in the blessed hope, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own. This has been and is, still the blessed hope of the Christian, and it is this patience of hope that the Christian needs, to live the Christ life in this waiting and watching time.

The Apostle is giving thanks unto God in behalf of these Thessalonian converts and makes mention in his prayers of their faith, labor of love and patience of hope, however, in this second letter no mention is made concerning this patience of hope. Faith and love are mentioned as being possessed but their hope had suffered. The Apostle's object then in writing this second letter was to confirm this hope. The letter was written in the interest of the blessed hope of our gathering

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together in Him, that in some way this might be revived so that the Church might be waiting and watching for the return of the Head for the Body, the Church. In this letter the Apostle repairs for the Thessalonian Church, and for us, the mischief caused by false teachers.

It will help us to understand what the Apostle has set forth in this letter if we look carefully into the condition of the church at the time the letter was written. Paul had been compelled to leave the Thessalonian Church after being with them just about three weeks, reasoning with them out of the Scriptures. This would not give sufficient time to fully instruct them in all the essential doctrines pertaining to the Church. In the first letter we learn that this church has made real advancement in Christian education and the author speaks in his letter of this model Church, model servant, model brother and model walk. Here we learn just what trouble can be brought into a Church by false teachers who pervert the Gospel, who are not true to fundamentals, and teach religion and tradition not warranted by God Himself and His Word.

The first chapter is full of encouragement and comfort to the Christian even in times of persecution. He is assured of the rest that he possesses in the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan with all his hosts of wickedness will be visited with retribution. In the first Epistle the Holy Spirit gave us assurance that before the period of tribulation, or the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2), the Lord would come from Heaven to glorify his saints and the saints through resurrection and translation would return with Him into glory (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The Holy Spirit taught us in the first letter that the Lord would come from Heaven for His saints and so they would not need to be concerned about times and seasons because the Day of the Lord would not be ushered in until the Church, the Body of Christ, had been taken out of the earth.

The purpose then of the second letter is to clear up this obscurity and difficulty as to what is meant by the coming of the Lord for His saints and the Day of the Lord about which

the saints were not to be concerned because it would not come until after their departure. Some thought that the Day of the Lord with its threatened judgments had already come. If this period of judgment was already upon them, then the Lord had previously returned for His saints and all then upon the earth would be deprived of the blessed hope. These false teachers made the saints believe that the Day of the Lord had actually come, that the tribulation period had opened and, therefore, the believer and unbeliever all had to pass through the horrors described in the Word of God which are to take place in the period previous to the visible manifestation of the Lord Jesus. The Lord had left the world only about thirty-three years. He had promised to return and receive His own unto Himself (John 14:3), and therefore, nothing was more natural than that the Church should have expected His immediate return. Various circumstances heightened this expectation.

The coming of the Lord for His saints is the rapture of the church. Had it not been for these false teachers, misinterpreting the Scripture there would not have been this confusion concerning the Day of the Lord and the return of the Lord for His saints. It will be well to be clear on what God says, that the Day of the Lord cannot come until the Church of the living God is removed from judgment and tribulation. The Day of the Lord is the opening of this period of judgment through tribulation and will not close until the Son of Man shall ride forth on the white horse at the head of His army of redeemed saints to take vengeance upon those who know not God (Rev. 19:11-16). The period of grace will have closed, the age of mercy will be no longer, as He goes forth to rule the ungodly with "a rod of iron." God has wonderfully revealed through the Holy Spirit that which concerns the future of His Church and the future of the world. If the Christians were to pass through the tribulation which God has revealed will come upon the world during the period in which God will pour forth His wrath, then the blessed hope would cease to be an incentive to purity and holiness as now set forth by the

inspired Word of God. These false teachers even went so far as to bring forth a document which they presented as a letter from Paul trying to prove that he was in favor of what they taught. The Apostle because of these deceivers uses this language in closing the letter, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token of every Epistle: so I write."

The Church was thrown into confusion because of these false leaders, some believing one thing and some another. Because of this some neglected their secular business and lived idle and useless lives, concluding that there was no use working in a world that was so soon to be destroyed. These are among those who were not fully instructed in Romans, receiving their true standing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Ephesians, being with Christ in the Heavenlies, and because of this they were not patient in hope concerning the coming of the Lord. This is what the Apostle is making clear to these saints.

In every period of the Church there have always been some to bring reproach upon it and the Word of God, because they are untrained in the Church literature given by the Holy Spirit to be used in this age of grace. Some take the position that because Christ has not come, therefore, the Apostles themselves were mistaken and the Word of God does not mean what it says. This kind of teaching is in harmony with the belief of world betterment and entire world conversion before the coming of the Lord. This is contrary and in direct opposition to what God in His Inspired Word sets forth concerning the Church and His dealings with the world. In the study of this letter our faith is strengthened and confirmed in the blessed hope and the believer assured of his presence with the Lord in glory during the period of tribulation and judgment, prophesied by Daniel and Christ, which shall be visited upon the unregenerate world.

THE ANALYSIS

I. The Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ From Heaven, 1:1-12

Paul after the address and salutation commences this Epistle by rendering thanks to God for the welcome intelligence he had received of the increase of the faith and love of his Thessalonian converts, so that he was able to boast of them throughout all the Churches of Achaia, on account of their steadfastness in the continued endurance in the period of persecution. Their present suffering was an evidence of a future state of retribution. The Apostle expressed his constant prayer for the Thessalonians, that God would enable them to walk worthy of their high calling.

1. THE INTRODUCTION, 1:1-4

(1) The Salutation, 1:1-2

Ver. 1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse is just the same as the first verse in the first letter. It is written in the joint names, as all three are engaged in the planting of this church at Thessalonica. Timothy was Paul's spiritual son and had an unfeigned faith and therefore worthy to have his name appear with Paul's. Paul had chosen Silas to accompany him on his missionary tour. He was with him in establishing the different mission points, experienced persecution with Paul at Philippi, and no doubt, was with him during the three weeks of reasoning with these Thessalonian converts out of the Scriptures and, therefore, his name is also worthy to appear with the Apostle in the opening of these letters.

Ver. 2. Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's grace is entirely God's free favor. It begins with the sinner in his degraded and sinful state and God's grace is sufficient to make him a complete and perfect saint. This now is without money and without price. Christian grace is an active energy of God. The Christian continues to live upon grace. Peace is the crown of Christian prosperity. We must have peace with God or we cannot enjoy the other rich things He has provided for us. Peace is the most perfect of blessings. This is the greatest outcome of grace. Both of these are received by us through Christ. He Himself is our grace and peace. When we fully learn the secret of Christ we shall be in possession of peace which passeth all understanding.

(2) The Thanksgiving, 1:3-4

Ver. 3. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth.

This thanksgiving is not to be limited to Paul. It no doubt includes his two associates inasmuch as they are mentioned in the preceding verse. They first of all praise their converts for the good that was in them. They were full of faith and love. He later calls attention to some things that were not so commendable because of false teaching. This was his tactful way of securing their attention. He claims the right to do so under these circumstances. He gives the reason for this thanksgiving, showing that it is their spiritual condition.

"For that your faith groweth exceedingly." He does not forget the labor bestowed upon this church during but a few weeks and therefore feels under obligation always to this Church, strong in faith, and for this reason engages in thanksgiving. They had sown the seed and the seed had been watered and God gave abundant increase. Each of them gave proof of continued growth in faith. The Apostle next emphasizes the love which they had one for another. The love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts was expressed in Christian

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fellowship. This love was continually on the increase. Faith and love must grow if it is true and living. Faith is the root and love is the fruit.

Ver. 4. So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure.

Paul and his associates are filled with joy to learn and experience just what God can do for those who come honestly and faithfully to Him for help. In the first letter the Apostle makes it clear that there is no need of emphasizing the faith and love of these disciples because everywhere the people are talking about the characteristics of these Christians. "Not only do they talk to us and speak of it but we also in our exceeding joy proclaim it."

"For your patience and faith." These Thessalonian Christians had suffered much persecution both from the Judaizing teachers and from the heathen Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:14). Paul had reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. They believed the Word of God. They experienced God's power in changing them from the old nature into the new, and, therefore, suffering and persecution could not weaken their faith and love and turn them aside from following the true and living God. They suffered from the truth and showed to the persecutors they believed the truth of God. The Apostle says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here among these Thessalonians He gloried not so much in his own achievements as in the triumph of the cross of Christ.

QUESTIONS

Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Who was with Paul in the writing?

Explain the meaning of grace and peace?

Give the reason for Paul giving thanks.

What persecution had to be endured by the Thessalonians at the time of the writing of this Epistle?

2. THE PERSECUTION OF THE THESSALONIANS, 1:5-6

The Apostle comforts them with the thought of the certainty of the future judgment upon those who trouble them.

Ver. 5. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.

"Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. 58:11). The affliction of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked in the present world are not inconsistent with these righteous judgments. This has always been a problem in the world—how to understand the mystery of Divine providence. The Book of Job sets forth God's righteousness during man's prosperity and man's poverty and suffering. The Apostle comforts the Christian by saying that the persecution and tribulation which is endured is a manifest proof that God has judged righteously in calling them into His church. The Head of the Church, Christ, came into the world, was persecuted, nailed to the cross, and now we are members of His Body, therefore, we as His are in this period of suffering and through this, God will bring us into everlasting joy. This shows that the suffering of the righteous and the prosperity of their wicked persecutors was a clear proof that there will be a future state of retribution where all this will be adjusted by God Himself, when this violation of the justice of God will be rectified, the persecutor punished and the persecuted rewarded.

"That ye may be counted worthy." Man cannot merit his salvation as a reward. Salvation can only be obtained through the merit and mediation of Christ. The righteous will be rewarded for their faith and patience (Heb. 6:10). We are worthy of the kingdom because we suffer righteously. Christ has suffered and we must suffer with Him so we may also share His glory with Him (Rom. 8:17). "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God" (Phil. 1:28). The practical lesson to learn is that through

suffering while living the Christian life in these bodies, we are all the time making ourselves more worthy as children of God. Our suffering must be the suffering of Christ.

Ver. 6. If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you.

The Christian by suffering as Christ suffered, makes himself worthy before God to receive the reward of the righteous because he is counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which he suffered. This will also be manifested by God when, through punishment, he settles with those who persecute his saints. They therefore, who have given you tribulation shall in God's own time have visited upon them tribulation in recompense. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them which trouble you. The righteous are often persecuted and afflicted whereas the wicked are happy and prosperous. Herod sits upon the throne and Christ expires on the cross, however, God will Himself rectify these conditions. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."

QUESTIONS

What was a token of the righteous judgment of God?

What makes us worthy?

What was a righteous thing with God?

3. THE REVELATION OF CHRIST AS A JUDGE, 1:7-10

The Apostle is telling us in these verses something about Christ's coming. He is to be revealed from Heaven and every eye shall see Him. This is the coming of Christ for judgment. When He came the first time He came to save the world. When He is revealed from Heaven as judge He comes to deal out justice to those who were disobedient to the Word of God.

Ver. 7. And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire.

The Apostle comforts the Christian by saying that in this

period of persecution they are to rest with Paul and his associates as founders of this Church. He means to say that there is to be a rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). This rest or relaxation is to be enjoyed in the world to come where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest (John 3:17). This is a period of external persecution, but there is a time coming when they shall enjoy internal rest. The Apostle included himself and his associates among those persecuted and afflicted.

“At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven.” This is a revealing of Christ. It is a visible manifestation. This is not the coming of the Lord for His saints, but it is the coming of the Lord in the Day of the Lord, when Christ shall come forth from Heaven and bring persecution upon the wicked who made the followers of Christ to suffer because they believed on Him as their Saviour. This Day of the Lord, the period of tribulation, the time of judgment, so clearly set forth in different passages of the Old Testament as well as in the New, will be the time when God will recompense those who trouble and have troubled His children.

This is a further explanation of what the Apostle set forth in the sixth verse in the former paragraph. During the period of the Day of the Lord the saints will be at rest in glory and their wicked enemies will suffer their well deserved punishment. This shows us that the Day of the Lord had not yet come. When this period does come the Lord Himself will be revealed from Heaven with His redeemed saints and mighty angels. Christ will come to judge the world accompanied by those who have been and are faithful to His orders as Captain (Matt. 24:30, 31). These angels are sent forth to execute His commands. The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge the world is seldom mentioned in the sacred writings without calling our attention to those who are to be with Him in bringing about the judgment of God upon those who are in opposition to His revealed Word.

Ver. 8. Rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Here we have a further description of the revelation of Jesus Christ coming to judge the world. He is to appear in flaming fire. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush in flaming fire and now in coming to judge the ungodly He is represented as coming in fire. This may refer to the fire of universal conflagration which will be ushered in during this period known in the Word of God as the Day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:10).

"That know not God." The heathen know not God and, therefore, will not acknowledge Him. The self righteous Jew by perverting the Word of God does not know God to the acknowledgment of His Son, and therefore, is among those who do not know. Those who make and worship idols do not obey God but are among those who do not know God. These are the persons who persecuted Christ and His messengers. Why should these benighted people be punished for not knowing God? The Gentiles had opportunity to know God (Rom. 1:18-20). The Jewish nation had given unto them the oracles of God and yet with all of that through the self righteousness and tradition, their minds were darkened and they did not know God.

Ver. 9. Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

The unbelieving Gentiles and Jews shall pay the penalty and suffer the punishment they deserve. It is to be eternal, everlasting. This declaration made by the Apostle regarding the duration of punishment has troubled many interpreters. An effort is made to set aside what the Bible so clearly teaches and substitute that which is more in harmony with man's reasoning and man's judgment. Paul teaches, as well as all others who were worthy to convey the oracles of God, that everlasting punishment is in store for the wicked and everlasting life and spiritual wealth is in store for all who share with Christ in glory.

"From the face of the Lord." All who do not know God through Christ who suffered on the cross as a mediator and

who obey not the Gospel of God will be expelled from the joy and glory which hath its presence in Christ. All who are cut off from this joy and glory and holiness are banished from His presence and share with Satan whom they served, as Christ Himself teaches when He appeared to John on the Isle of Patmos. Christ came, He taught, He healed, He raised from the dead, and the very ones He came to bring out of darkness into the light, rejected God's Son as their Saviour. They would not have Him as their teacher, as their Saviour. Now the time is coming when they will accept Him as their judge who will banish them from the presence of God and His redeemed ones.

Ver. 10. **When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed** (because our testimony unto you was believed) **in that day.**

Christ will come to be glorified in His saints. The Apostle shows this to be one of the purposes of His coming at this time of judgment. His saints are made up of His own new nature, and when these saints will be glorified and have their glorified bodies, Christ Himself will be glorified in them. It will not be the nature of the holy angels but the Christ nature which will be manifested in the saints, those whom He redeemed with His own blood. They will be reflected in Christ as a mirror, the glory of the Lord.

"And to be marvelled at." To be wondered at, that such glory can be manifested by those who have come out of sin and iniquity and now brought forth by Christ Himself perfect and complete as God's handiwork.

Christ will be glorified in His saints, however, Christ will also when revealed, be glorified in the punishment of the wicked. The Apostle gives his reason for having such great interest in the revelation of Jesus and the coming glory, "Because our testimony among you was believed."

"In that day." This phrase we find often used by the prophets in the Old Testament. It nearly always refers to the day of the visible manifestation of Jehovah in dealings and

judgments with His enemies and in delivering those of His earthly people, Israel, who wait for Him (Is. 25:9). "And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall punish the hosts of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Is. 24:21). Judgment for the world is connected with the Day of the Lord. Jesus said, "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels and then He shall reward every man according to His works" (Matt. 16:27). This visible manifestation of Christ bringing judgment upon the earth is more fully revealed in His message to John on Patmos (Rev. 19:20-21).

The Apostle mentions two classes of people that God will deal with during the period of the Day of the Lord. Those that know not God: heathen Gentiles, Jews, and nominal professing Christians. If there is any difference as to punishment, the Jews to whom God had given His oracles were under greater responsibility and, therefore, one would naturally suppose they would have to answer for more before God than the Gentiles who had not received these oracles. The true Church is no longer on earth. Saints have been caught up to meet Him in the air and are with Him in glory. The manifestations of the Sons of God who have been transformed into His image are during this period of tribulation reflecting the glory of the Lord who bought them by the shedding of His own blood. It seems hard to endure persecution for a period as the Thessalonians had to do, but think of what is to be enjoyed in the future. Christ has promised to share His inheritance and be able to manifest His own Glory through these suffering ones. This is so marvelous that every saint whose eyes are open to see the blessings that are in store for the future will forget the sufferings and trials that must be endured in this present world and will be able to say, "These are nothing to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."

QUESTIONS

Explain the meaning of "rest with us."

Who is to be present and enjoy the revelation of Jesus?

Who will be with Him in His coming judgment?

Whom will He take vengeance upon when He comes?

What is the duration of punishment and what is the duration of joy?

What punishment is described for the wicked?

In what will Christ be glorified?

What is meant by "in that day?"

4. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHRISTIANS IN PROSPECT OF THEIR GLORIFICATION, 1:11-12

He prays that God's favor may rest upon them. His wish was that they would undergo the necessary preparatory work in anticipation of their future glory. The prayer has in it a double purpose.

Ver. 11. To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power.

In the previous verses the Apostle Paul was reciting the persecutions endured by the Christians and the revelation of Christ from Heaven to take vengeance upon the persecutors and those who obey not the Gospel of God. This revelation of Christ will show His glorification in His Saints and He will be admired by them that believe. These wonderful things to be experienced by the Christian helps Paul to lift up his heart in gratitude to God because all of these converts in the Church at Thessalonica may be among the glorified ones. We have learned that God calls through His Son all these saints before the foundation of the world, and now in this age of grace, they have an opportunity to be true to that call and not disappoint the God who has called them but they all may receive His approval by being worthy. We are called to be Christians and as such we have entered the pilgrimage of the Heavenly life. The Christian's calling involves high obligation. God watches the walk of those whom He has called. It is most important that we should know that we are the called ones of God, never out of His sight so we may be reckoned worthy of our vocation, because His favor to us is eternal life. God's pleasure is in our goodness and work of faith. It is the faith

which is active, living and productive of good works that God honors and fulfils in all moral goodness. This prayer offered by the Apostle Paul can only be answered by those who are called according to the Divine purpose (Rom. 8:28). Our sufficiency is of God. "We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5).

Ver. 12. That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian must constantly have in view the glorifying of the name of Christ and Paul prays that God may bring about in us this great result. The Christian lives for Christ. He is part of Christ and so is always with Him. We are in Christ and Christ is in us. Christ is our honored guest and we glorify Him. Christ being in us, we are made partakers of His glorious nature. His name is above every name.

The Apostle knows that there is no limit to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It then follows that our salvation may be such as God requires and such as is worthy of His grace. God saves as becomes God, and we experience and know the power of His new nature within us and the excellent glory of His work. It is awful to consider that the people of the world are so set against that which is good that they will bring persecution upon the true church of God. This shows that the true church of God is built for His own habitation and that the unregenerate world is opposed to the Church and to God. The person who becomes a child of God is not persecuted for any harm he may do but because he manifests the spirit of Christ. The Holy Spirit presents the two classes of people here and shows the destiny of each: those who are Christ's (and Paul prays for their glorification); those who are not Christ's and because of their iniquity will receive at the time that Christ will be revealed from Heaven, punishment and separation from everything that is good. When Christ will be revealed we will receive that for which we serve in this world. These are days of great opportunities and by

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using them as directed by the Word of God we will be counted worthy to receive the very best gifts from God.

QUESTIONS

What was the purpose of Paul's prayer at the close of this chapter?

First: that the name of the Lord may be glorified in His saints.

Second: that the saints may be glorified in the Lord.

How can we be counted worthy of this calling?

What was the work of faith?

Can the Christian know what to expect after death?

What two classes of persons are set forth in this chapter?

II. The Day of the Lord and the Man of Sin, 2:1-17

The Apostle now proceeds to the principle object which he had in view in writing this Epistle. The Thessalonians did not fully understand the coming of the Lord for His own and the Day of the Lord when God shall come with manifested glory to take vengeance upon those who are disobedient unto Him and His Son. The Apostle reminds them of his former instructions on this subject as presented in the first Epistle (4:13-18, 5:1-11). All who did not get a clear distinction presented in the first epistle concerning the two great events that are to happen in the future, the coming of the Lord for His own which is to precede the Day of the Lord, will have another opportunity in this letter to let the Holy Spirit set out more clearly the difference between the two great events. The first event is the gathering together of those who are the Lord's, living and dead, as presented in First Thessalonians (4:13-18). The second event, the Day of the Lord, the revealing of Christ from Heaven to take vengeance upon those who will not believe will not take place until Christ has come for the Church which is His Body.

1. THE COMING OF THE LORD FOR HIS OWN BEFORE THAT GREAT DAY, 2:1-2

The Thessalonian saints having been fully instructed by the Apostle Paul concerning the doctrine in the book of Romans,

were sure of their standing in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were also dwelling with Christ in the Heavenlies because they were members of His Body as Paul sets forth in the Book of Ephesians. They had reached such a standard in Christian education that the coming of the Lord for His own and His coming to punish the wicked in the Day of the Lord, were of tremendous interest. The Apostle had taught them to watch and pray. Some no doubt had been led into error through false teachers, that the Day of the Lord had already set in and, therefore, Christ had already come for His own and they had missed the blessings of going with the redeemed into glory. This brought sadness into many homes who had been waiting and looking for Christ's return and expected to leave the earth before the tribulation period and the coming judgment.

Ver. 1. Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him.

The Apostle entreats the brethren, showing that he is deeply interested in the blessed hope which had been so clearly set forth in his first letter. The Apostle had not attempted to fix the time of the coming, however, he emphasized the fact that they ought to watch and pray because Christ Himself said, he would come at a time when many would not be looking for Him. Satan is the deceiver and his purpose is to blind the people so they cannot and will not look for Christ's coming and when He does come according to the teaching of the Word, many will be deceived. Satan was deceiving some in the time of the Early Church. Satan is always trying to make people believe that God does not mean what He says and so he has some to ask the question, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. 3:1). He had them doubt the Word of God. He is always trying to deceive those who have God's Word as he deceived our first parents in the Garden of Eden. He influenced them to disbelieve what God said.

Some have thought that the coming of the Lord was in A. D. 70 at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. The Apostacy was the revolt of the Jews from the Romans. Others

believe that His coming and only coming is to the individual at the time of death. The coming of the Lord for His own is none of those but for the gathering of His loved ones unto Himself through resurrection and translation, for a complete redemption of His own.

Ver. 2. To the end that ye be not quickly (or lightly, with little reason) shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit (by anyone appearing to have a spiritual gift of prophecy), or by word (of mouth), or by epistle (purporting to have been written) as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand.

The disciples were in trouble again as they had been in First Thessalonians (Chap. 4), and this is written for the express purpose of removing that trouble. They had been taught by the Holy Spirit through Paul that before the Day of the Lord should come they would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air to be forever with Him. This would all happen before that great and terrible day would set in. The Apostle therefore gives the warning in this verse that, "You be not easily influenced and led away from the truth (shaken, agitated like the waves by the storm), but that you hold carefully to what God says in reference to this matter." It is always well to retain the truth. It is the truth that sets us free no matter how unreasonable it may appear to those who know not God and the power of His Word. These Thessalonians were troubled, troubled simply because they did not obey the voice of God and believe just what God said.

"Either by spirit." We were taught in the former Epistle not to despise prophesying and to believe all that the prophets had spoken. The Apostle refers to prophetic discourses delivered by those who did not have full information as to what was taught. There may have been no purpose on their part to deceive these Thessalonians, but they erred in not being able fully to comprehend what is meant by the teaching of God's prophets. "Nor by word." The Apostle had taught orally and by writing and what he had said was not fully comprehended.

Now anything that the Apostle said that was misunderstood, he aims to correct in this letter.

"Or by epistle." These false teachers in order to prove the doctrine they presented to be true, called attention to a written document claimed to have been written by Paul and they quoted from it no doubt as though they were giving instructions from Paul. It is possible that this letter was written for the purpose of deceiving; at least it was to enforce the false doctrine as if sanctioned by the Apostle.

"As from us." The Apostle wants these Christians to understand that the truth in reference to these matters was clearly set out in the last two chapters of the former Epistle. He does not want the pretended saying or letter of his to disturb them concerning these doctrinal truths. These deceivers tried to show that the Day of the Lord had come. There is an important difference between the Day of the Lord and the day of Christ. The day of Christ concerns the Church, the members of Christ's Body. The Day of the Lord concerns the earth, both of Israel and the nation. The Day of Christ comes, the Day of the Lord follows. We must in this verse follow the revised version. The day of Christ is the day referred to when we shall be gathered together unto Him. The prophetic teaching of the Holy Spirit will be fulfilled as described in Paul's first letter. This hope of being gathered together at the coming of Christ for His saints is the true reason why we should not be troubled by those who speak concerning the Day of the Lord being present.

"Now present." The Greek "is at hand" should be translated "set in," or "be present." It will be well to study carefully the verse as printed here. The Apostle shows that this Day of the Lord is still in the future. If the Day of the Lord had opened and they had not been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, then there was sufficient ground to be troubled. If the time had come for the Lord to be revealed from Heaven in judgment on His enemies, and He had not previously come to be glorified in His saints, then their faith was vain and their

hope was vain. These teachers had deceived them. The Holy Spirit is the bringer of the truth and has promised to make the truth clear to the believer. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to know just what is meant here that our faith may be made stronger, love more abiding, and the blessed hope more real.

QUESTIONS

Why did the Apostle entreat these converts at this time?
 What about our gathering together unto Him?
 Tell in your own words just what you understand by it.
 Are the Christian people now troubled about the blessed hope?
 What did the false teachers do to weaken this hope?
 What is the meaning of the Day of the Lord?

2. THE APOSTASY AND THE MAN OF SIN, 2:3-4

Here we have the all conclusive reason given by the Apostle why the Day of the Lord cannot set in or happen until the Church of God shall have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The saints shall first be gathered unto Him and Christ Himself shall be glorified in His saints.

Ver. 3. Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

Deceivers are often more earnest in their effort to deceive than those who are in possession of truth to instruct and correct. God knows that the world is full of deceivers and through the Holy Spirit we are warned not to be deceived by any man. The Holy Spirit forewarns and prepares us to meet all deceivers by the power of the Word. We must be steadfast, looking for the coming of the Lord. The apostasy is yet to come. Let no man deceive you in any of the methods presented in the previous verse, either by spirit, word or letter.

"For it will not be, except the falling away come first." If the Day of the Lord had set in then the last great apostasy must have taken place. The Anti-Christ must have been revealed, for he is to be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. All that Daniel had prophesied concerning Satan and

his companions must have taken place, and the man of sin revealed. We can in some way understand why the Holy Spirit brings such warning to us. "Let no man deceive you in any way whatever." There are many professing Christians deceived in spite of the solemn words contained here in the Word of God. The professing Church teaches by the so-called new theology that the Day of the Lord shall not come until all the people shall be converted. The Holy Spirit teaches the very opposite, showing that the world is not yet bad enough for the beginning of the day of judgment. Those in the professing Church who believe in world betterment and have that as one of the specific missions of the Church instead of the saving of souls are teaching us that the world is not yet good enough, however, the Christians in the early church believed what Christ and the Holy Spirit teaches.

"The man of sin be revealed." The revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition as prophesied by the Scripture, will take place on the earth before the visible manifestation of the Lord from Heaven in judgment. We are told that before the revelation of the man of sin and the setting in of the Day of the Lord there is to be a falling away from God and His truth, and this falling away is manifesting itself in a very remarkable way in many countries and some of our most influential educational centers. Professing Christian men and women are not contending for the "faith once delivered unto the saints." We are instructed here that there will be a complete apostasy. The faith on fundamentals and the doctrinal teaching of the Word is abandoned and we are coming to fulfil the truth of Christ when He said, "How be it, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth." The Holy Spirit teaches that there is a definite time when this present age of grace will close (2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet. 2). He emphasized this same truth in many other passages of Scripture. The Apostle considers the man of sin as the counterpart of Christ. As Christ was revealed so the man of sin will be revealed. This personality that is to be revealed (Rev. 13:1-10)

is called the "beast from the sea" or the "beast out of the sea." The son of perdition, the man of sin, is leading and directing the work of apostasy.

Ver. 4. He that (or the one that) opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth (or exhibiting the proof) as God.

This person and his mission is in direct opposition to God and His Word. He is superhuman and establisheth himself to be the Christ or God to be worshipped by humanity. He has set aside God and takes His place on the earth. There are many people today who are worshipping Christ as the man of flesh who in a Divine sense was above other men, but they only worship him in that exalted greatness as one above other men. They do not believe in Him as the Son of God who by one act of obedience died on the cross to save the world. The world is magnifying man and exalting the work of man and in this period, described as the revelation of the man of sin, the people will have an opportunity to worship the Anti-Christ, the superhuman, who sets aside God and takes his place.

"So that he sitteth in the temple of God." Daniel tells us that he will have an influence and power over those who forsake the holy covenant (Dan. 11:30). Paul tells us here that the man of sin shall sit in God's Temple, showing himself to have taken God's place. Daniel speaks of an abomination of desolation being set up in the holy place of God (Dan. 11:31). Paul tells us that the man of sin shall oppose all that is called God and exalt himself as an object of worship. "And the king shall do according to his will: and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done" (Dan. 11:36). That which the Apostle teaches here is fully in harmony with the prophesy of Daniel and no doubt he had in mind the fulfilment of the teaching of the prophet. This prediction concerning the man of sin was of deep interest

in the early church. The church fathers made frequent reference to it in their writing.

The Apostle in speaking of the temple of God does not have reference to the Church. This is a Jewish temple. He cannot have reference to the Church, the Body of Christ, because the Body of Christ will have been removed by Christ the Head before the man of sin shall sit in the temple of God. God had made a covenant with the Jews and had delivered His oracles unto them and because of their disobedience He had set aside this nation, because of the rejecting of His Son for a time. This time was during the period of grace, the forming of the Body for the Lord Christ. The Jewish people after this are once more restored to their own land and brought back to their own home. This indicates that they had not been brought into covenant relation with God and they are still in their unbelieving state and will erect another temple in which to worship (Isa. 66: 1-4). God will be wonderfully displeased with their worship, having the man of sin to sit upon their throne to be worshipped. This man of sin will sit in that temple of the Jews demanding all to worship the image that he sets up and that image will be an image of himself to be worshipped. This all is to take place during Jacob's trouble and the great tribulation. This man of sin, the son of perdition will be under the direction of Satan and will have power given to him by Satan. All prophetic students are looking forward to this period for the fulfilment of many of the Old Testament prophetic utterances.

QUESTIONS

Is there danger in being deceived?

How can we know when we are deceived?

About what were the Thessalonians deceived?

Tell fully the deception now as to the Day of the Lord.

Is there any indication of apostasy at the present time?

Who is to come and take God's place?

What is the temple referred to in Ver. 4?

3. THE REVELATION OF THE MAN OF SIN AND HIS DOOM, 2:5-8

Had the Thessalonians remembered the instructions of the Apostle, individual members of the Church would not have been so soon shaken from their sober reason. The Apostle when he was in Thessalonica had told them of these things. He had instructed them in the nature of the apostasy and the coming of the man of sin.

Ver. 5. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

This is one of the subjects that was very clear in the Apostle's mind and he did not fail to teach it, among other important lessons to the Churches. These words are reproachful. The Apostle had instructed them concerning the nature of this apostasy and he calls attention to the fact that they themselves remember that he gave them this information.

Ver. 6. And now ye know that which restraineth (holdeth him fast), to the end that he may be revealed in his own season.

He is to appear at an appointed time. The Apostle had informed the Thessalonians when he was with them what hindered the man of sin from revealing himself more fully before the appointed time. The time had not yet come for his fuller appearance. We are told of a time or fulness of time when Christ shall appear, so there shall be a fulness of time when the man of sin shall be revealed. There are a series of events to happen, one after another, which will finally culminate in a full revelation of the man of sin. The nature of this restraining or withholding influence will be fully overcome.

"That which restraineth." There is something that hinders this fuller revelation of the man of sin until the proper time. The Church of God is the salt of the earth and as long as the Holy Spirit abides in it the fuller revelation of the Anti-Christ cannot take place. The Holy Spirit is building up the habitation in the Body of Christ. The Church will cease this restraining and withholding influence when removed out of the

earth and then this fuller revelation of the man of sin will take place.

Ver. 7. **For the mystery of lawlessness (iniquity) doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now** (holdeth fast to his possessions in the heavenlies), **until he be taken out of the way** (until he be cast out of the earth, Rev. 12:9-12, and stand upon the sand of the sea, Rev. 13:1).

This mystery of lawlessness is already working. This is what the Apostle Paul informs the followers of Christ. Sin is lawlessness and has been at work from the beginning. Man has always exalted himself and when he did this he set aside his duty and relation to the Creator. This works on until it becomes open lawlessness. This is out and out opposition to God and His Son, culminating in the man of sin, the false Christ, and will give humanity unrestrained liberty to work out its evil progress which under the present state of Christianity is impossible. "Only there is one—Satan—who at present holdeth fast his possessions as still in the Heavens." The word "holdeth" in Ver. 6, and the word "let" in Ver. 7, in the authorized version, has the word "restrain" in the revised. It must, therefore, have an object after it which should be supplied in the translation. The verb means to have and to hold fast—to hold in secure possession. This can be better understood by referring to 1 Thess. 5:21, "Hold fast that which is good." The idea is to keep and retain or hold fast to that which is proved to be good, so it is in all the passages where the word occurs. It means to hold fast something, but what is it that the man of sin holds fast? There is something valuable to which he is holding. It is something out of which he is revealed or ascends (Rev. 9:12; 11:7). He is holding fast his possession until the season arrives when he shall be openly revealed. Now before that takes place, his secret councils and plans are already at work preparing the way for his fuller revelation.

We have the revelation of two persons: the man of sin (Ver. 3), and the lawless one (Ver. 8). This harmonizes with the teaching of Rev. 13, regarding the man of sin or the

beast from the sea. Open apostasy precedes and marks his revelation. The lawless one is called the beast from the earth. The working out of his secret councils will precede his revelation and the removal of Satan from Heaven brings it about.

"Until he be taken out of the way." The lawless one at the present time is held fast in a pit while his secret councils are at work. The devil himself is holding on to his possessions in Heaven (Eph. 2:2; 6:12). Presently there will be war in Heaven (Rev. 12:7), and Satan will be cast out into the earth. "And I (Satan) stood upon the sand of the sea" (Rev. 13:1). Here he will call upon the lawless one whom John sees rising out of the sea to run his brief career and be destroyed by the glory of the Lord's appearing (Ver. 8). With these pictures of iniquity before us we now turn with the Apostle (Ver. 8) to see what the Lord will do for His own.

Ver. 8. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming. (Is. 11:4).

There is a time appointed for the revealing of the lawless one; wickedness unveiled in all its naked deformity no longer working secretly as it does now, but openly and in an undisguised form. In the former verse we were told that something or someone had the power to withhold this revelation for a time. Who or what restrains it? Many answers have been given to this question. We have set forth the thought in the former verse that Satan has superhuman power in holding on to his possessions in the Heavens and as long as he is able to do this, the lawless one is not fully revealed. Others believe that the restraining comes from the Church and the Holy Spirit who is now the leader and agent in building up the Church. The Church and the Holy Spirit being taken out of the world, this restraining power is removed. The Church composed of true members of Christ, is gone and consequently the Holy Spirit, as a comforter, is no longer dwelling here. After this

the apostasy takes place. All hindrances have been removed and the lawless one is manifesting himself in his fulness. Evil assumes a definite shape in him who is its head. While the man of sin is unveiled, the Apostle also announces his doom. Gross darkness has come upon the nations, the enemy of all good comes in like a flood, and the lawless one is here. Christ and the Apostles are very definite in teaching that the Church, the Body of Christ, will not be on the earth during the complete unveiling of evil, and when this is come to a close. No true believer will be in the final apostasy of the lawless one, nor will the true church pass through this great tribulation.

"Whom the Lord." We have had the revelation of the lawless one. Here we have the revelation of another whom God said would bruise the serpent's head and be victorious over all manifestations of evil. The lawless one meets his doom. We have here the description of the power and irresistible might of Christ at His coming. The mere breath of His mouth is sufficient to consume the wicked. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." When He comes His appearance will be in such glory and brightness that it will mean destruction to the lawless one. This does not mean utter annihilation of the personal existence of the man of sin and those who are with him, for indeed he is cast into a lake of fire. When he comes to destroy by the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming, the Church, His redeemed Body will be with Him by which God's power will display what has been accomplished during the period of the church age.

QUESTIONS

- What did Paul do with the Church before?
- What special thing did he tell them?
- What did they know themselves?
- What was to be revealed at a certain time?
- What was this mystery of iniquity?
- Is it a work now?
- When will the wicked one be revealed?
- What effect will Christ have upon Him?

4. DEVELOPMENT OF INIQUITY AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON CHRISTIANDOM, 2:9-12

In the former paragraph we have learned about the restraining influence of evil and the time when this withholding will cease and the revelation take place of the evil one. The Apostle is doing all this to show the difference between the coming of Christ for His own and the coming of Christ with His own in glory to meet the man of sin when fully revealed. In this paragraph the Apostle sets forth the methods used by the man of sin.

Ver. 9. Even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs (miracles) and lying wonders (marvels).

The source of all this activity is Satan. Here we have more than simply human depravity at work. Satan himself is in this human depravity showing his influence and power. The lawless one, the Anti-Christ, will come directed by Satan. Christ spoke the truth, wrought miracles of truth. The miracles of the man of sin, the Anti-Christ will be miracles of falsehood. He will be in possession of energy and power to perform wonderful things and they will be so wonderful that the world will be deceived and many who live simply by profession will be deceived (Matt. 24:24). Many are waiting to be led by somebody who has power and can work miracles. God has for a long time set before the world, the Christ and the truth contained in His Word, but the world would not receive either, and now he allows the wicked one to have sufficient power to do wonderful things, and these are the things that will deceive the many who are looking to someone who manifests power, but it is for the purpose of giving to the human that which they admire. We are already in a time when men show by turning away from the Word of God that they desire God's truth no longer and are dissatisfied with the patient, long-suffering God, and therefore, see already the professing world deceived by these mysteries of iniquity that are already working.

The signs were to be as false as their author. Their design was to attest the truth of the man of sin. He speaks lies in hypocrisy (1 Tim. 4:2). The ministers of Satan can as easily transform themselves into ministers of righteousness as Satan himself can become an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15). It is not possible to deceive those who have been chosen, elected, entered into the mystery of God in fellowship, and are among those who give their bodies as a living sacrifice wholly and acceptable. All who are blinded to the glory of the Gospel are in the way of easy deception (2 Cor. 4:3).

Ver. 10. And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; (Why?) because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

The man of sin works every form of deceit and falsehood and this he does by every possible method of unrighteousness. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. He cannot work in righteousness and, therefore, his whole mission is in unrighteousness. The Apostle gives a reason why these people perish. They did not receive the love of truth that they might be saved. They did not receive what God offered them. Everyone who wants to stand against principalities and powers and all wickedness in high places must have on the girdle of truth (Eph. 6:14). They did not receive the truth that was offered to them. They did that which was worse; they were destitute even of the love of the truth. Their hearts were accustomed to error and iniquity and, therefore, the truth of God did not appeal to them. They were led astray by numerous evils and allusions.

Christ died to save. They did not accept the truth that God had concerning His Son for the saving of their souls. God's truth is not given to reform or to make the world a better place in which to live, but by accepting truth men become regenerate. The rejectors of the truth will receive God's judgment. None of us can even imagine what will be the fate of millions who will not receive the truth and the love of the truth. They have pleasure in unrighteousness as de-

scribed in other places in the Word of God. While we do not like to think of the fate of the millions who are following the wicked one yet as believers in God and His Word we cannot help but know that He will do according to His Word.

Ver. 11. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie.

This secret council of iniquity is working in the world and in the professing church during this age. God will allow them to have just what Satan wills that they should have. The period has come when conditions are such in the world that God will gradually remove His restraint and Satan will have an opportunity to deceive further those who choose to be deceived. This great mystery of iniquity is already manifesting itself and has tremendous influence against the truth of God. Error is accepted instead of truth.

"God sendeth." This is the ordinance of God that the wicked by their wicked actions fall into greater wickedness and so sin itself is punished by greater sinning. The flesh would rather be directed by error. God will permit sufficient error to bring destruction when first it was received because it brought pleasure. The lie will have greater attraction to these people than the truth. This is the secret council of iniquity that is working for them now. God opens their minds to all kinds of falsehood and delusion. Here we have the practical lesson that God has the ability and power to increase truth to those who obey and love the truth, to deal out the good to those who love the good, but to those who despise the truth and love the influences of evil He is able to increase the evil and to magnify iniquity to those who love iniquity. God is all and in all, and no one can limit God's power for judgment. Those who delight in this mystery of iniquity are living under the leadership of the man of sin and will finally stand condemned before the God who is all truth.

Ver. 12. That they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The Word says that all will stand condemned before God who do not believe the truth. Those who prefer unrighteousness and the way of evil to that of holiness will learn by experience that God's Word is true. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 16:25). The Bible is constantly emphasizing the necessity of a complete separation between the Body of Christ and those who make up the class that prefers to live in unrighteousness. When the man of sin, the Anti-Christ appears, this will bring about complete separation. Those who do not obey the truth and love the truth as it is in Christ Jesus and are yet enjoying many of the blessings of God now offered unto all, when this time for complete separation takes place, will find themselves belonging to the company made up by the man of sin, and no longer be permitted to enjoy at least some blessings that God has for those who are with Christ in glory.

"Pleasure in unrighteousness." They have pleasure and joy in iniquity. These verses contain wonderful warnings given by God to the entire human race. Humanity is at the present, divided into but two classes: those who love and obey the truth, the regenerate, who abide in Christ; those who do not love the truth, the unregenerate, who have pleasure in unrighteousness. It is a great privilege to live in assurance that you are on the side of truth, to live that life of faith, love, and patience in hope, and know that some day you will hear Him whom you serve say, "Well done good and faithful servant—enter into the joys of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21).

QUESTIONS

Whom is Satan directing?

What was this wicked person able to perform?

What is the result of their unrighteousness and deception?

Explain the meaning of "love not the truth."

What part does God have in the further manifestation of this error?

What is the condemnation and why?

5. THANKSGIVING AND PURPOSE OF GOD MANIFESTED, 2:13-17

The Apostle gives his reasons here for his thanksgiving unto God. He is conscious of what God did for us who believe. It is well that the believer is frequently reminded of the purposes and plans of God which bring about the expectation and joy unto those who are called and kept according to God's purposes. We have here a marked contrast between that which the believer expects to receive from God and what the unbeliever is bringing upon himself by following the pleasures of unrighteousness, as presented in the former verse.

(1) The Divine Election, 2:13-14

Ver. 13. But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Paul's heart goes out in gratitude to God that the saints at Thessalonica are not led away by the man of sin. He is conscious of the fact that there are false teachers and that terrible wickedness is in the world at the time he is writing this letter. False teachers are even among the church members to whom he is writing the letter, and yet Paul has abundant reasons to thank God that His grace is so wonderfully manifested that it is sufficient to keep and separate them unto the Gospel of God and make them to abound in faith and love. In the former epistle he calls those to whom he is writing "beloved of God" (1 Thess. 1:4); here, "brethren beloved of the Lord." These are indirect proofs in these epistles of the divinity of Christ.

"For that God chose you from the beginning." We learn in the epistle written to the Ephesians that God called those who were to be His before the foundation of the world. God's election is eternal and only the accomplishment of it means that the call takes place in time. In your call God hath shown the purpose that He had from the beginning, to call the Gentiles to the same high privileges to be enjoyed by individual Jews

in this age of grace. It is not through service or obedience to the law but by faith in Christ that they were brought to enjoy the blessings of adoption. This is very different from those who are not saved and receive not the Gospel of God. They were not only chosen for salvation, they received their salvation through faith in Christ, and through faith in Christ, they received sanctification of the Spirit. Christ is the believer's righteousness and sanctification. They had to believe the truth of Christ when it was preached. They received the Spirit of God in believing the truth, and that Spirit was to them sanctification and holiness. It was to these an inward purity and holiness which would manifest itself in outward conformity to God.

Ver. 14. Whereunto he (God) called you through our gospel (the gospel preached by us), to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse again calls our attention to the whole clause of the former verse, being chosen to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whom God elects from eternity, He calls in time. The good news preached by the Apostle, if obeyed, would permit them to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. We as believers and joint-heirs with Christ are to anticipate being sharers in the glory of Christ. This is the consummation of the redemption promised the saints when in possession of the glorified body. The inducements and promises held forth to the Christian are confirmed by the exhortation that follows.

(2) Exhortation and Prayer, 2:15-17

Ver. 15. So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions (Apostle's instructions) which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours.

They were elected by God, therefore, it is perfectly consistent to call their attention to their Christian walk and conduct. This was especially needed at Thessalonica because of the agitation and disturbance caused by some misunderstanding

as to the coming of Christ. Believers not knowing the truth, were carried about by every wind of doctrine, and influenced by the errors of the wicked. They had received instruction from the Apostle at the time he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. The tradition spoken of here was not what Christ condemned in the Jewish Church. The traditions then were not the teachings and written Word of God, but that which was added by man contrary to the teaching of the Word. These instructions here are under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, are fully in harmony with what God sets forth in other parts of His Word. The Apostle engages in prayer after giving these words of exhortation.

Ver. 16. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father which loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace.

The root of all is the unmerited love of God. Grace has been bestowed upon us by God through Christ, so the power that is necessary to keep us and strengthen us and confirm us unto Him comes through the same channel of grace. God gives us eternal comfort. He does this by our acceptance of His Son by faith. God's eternal purpose was concerning Himself personal, that His Son might become head over all and those who are in His purpose, called when His Son was called, might become the Body of Christ. The Head of the Church and the Body of Christ are everlasting.

"Good hope through grace." The hope of the Gospel was the resurrection of the body and the final glorification of it and the soul through eternity. The resurrection of the Body of Christ, which is made up of individual believers in Christ, takes place when these saints are perfected. The Apostle says, "I have not yet attained." There are two things he had not yet attained that he was hoping for. One was the meeting of Christ at His coming for the saints and the other the receiving of His glorified body at the time when the redeemed shall come forth in resurrection, or those so fortunate as to be

alive at the coming of Christ shall be translated and meet with Christ in the air.

Ver. 17. **Comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.**

We are to stand fast and to hold fast the truth and these are two very essential things for those who are the called of God. Paul frequently speaks of comfort after discussing some very important teachings for the followers of Christ. He did this after discussing the subject of the coming of the Lord to give glorified bodies to those who had passed through death and to translate into glorified bodies those who are still on the earth at his coming. After giving these plain and careful instructions he concludes by saying, "Comfort one another with these words." When God comforts, He strengthens a soul. It is not enough that we be alive to the truth, we must live the truth. Only in this way can we be established while we are living in the world. We are in a period of restlessness and uncertainty, and yet when we pray to God we are assured that He will answer us. God loves us, God chooses us, God keeps us. Paul prayed for this church to be comforted. He prayed that God would establish them in every word of truth and the work that has on it God's approval. The Apostle presents many valuable lessons for the Christian who is faithful to the Word of God. In the midst of dangers there is comfort for the saints. God hath chosen them, therefore, they are under His keeping power. God is the only one that can give eternal comfort.

QUESTIONS

Why is Paul bound to give thanks?

What is the meaning of "our Gospel?"

What will be our source of glory?

When were these Christians chosen?

What was Paul's instructions to these Thessalonians (Ver. 15)?

For what specific thing did Paul pray at the close of this chapter?

How may the stability of the Christian be increased?

III. Closing Exhortations, 3:1-18

1. PRAYER FOR MISSIONS, 3:1-2

The Apostle is about to close his letter to this model Church. He has been much in prayer for this Church and now he asks an interest in their prayers. He knows that all those who will earnestly talk to God for a greater degree of holiness, for greater activity in service, will be rewarded by receiving greater strength and power for exercising in the duty of prayer. Paul asks that they might pray that the gospel may be more rapidly diffused and glorified by numerous conversions and that he and his fellow workers may preach the gospel unhindered by the enemy.

Ver. 1. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified even as also it is with you.

The subject of the prayer is expressed in the former verses. Observe the unselfishness of the Apostle's request. He does not ask that he alone be remembered in prayer, but that they would pray for the rapid diffusion and success of the Gospel, and that he and his companions might be free from any hindrance in the preaching of the Gospel so that God would crown their labors with success in winning men from the world unto Christ.

"That the Word of the Lord may run." That all obstacles may be removed. To run is to fill its course swiftly and without hindrance, and that it might go to places where it is not known. The Apostle's great ambition was to preach the Gospel of God unto which he was separated. The Gospel must keep moving onward, winning fresh hearts, exerting an evergrowing influence over those who have long felt its power. Ministers had their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. It is God who can remove all impediments and make the man whose feet are shod able to go forward with the truth over all obstacles.

"And be glorified." The Word of God is glorified in the saving of the lost. This personification of the Word of God

is a favorite figure with the Apostle. The believer is the temple in which the Holy Spirit abides. The Holy Spirit guides and speaks through the believer, sinners are saved and the Word is glorified. Men must be brought into the image of Christ and thus bring glory to God. "Even as it also is with you." This shows with what eagerness the Thessalonians had received the Gospel and what faith the Apostle had in them to use the Word of God.

Ver. 2. **And that (through your prayers) we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men; for all have not faith.**

The Apostle asks not only deliverance for himself but for his companions who are traveling with him, "We ask that we may be rescued from our enemies." In these words the Apostle does not express any cowardice on his part. He desires deliverance, not for his own sake, but for the free diffusion of the Gospel. He asks that through their prayers they might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, those who do not listen to truth. This no doubt refers to a company of unbelievers stirred up perhaps by the fanatical unbelieving Jews at Corinth.

"For all men have not the faith." This is the reason why he is compelled to speak of these unreasonable and evil men. The Apostle's life was the most valuable in all the world in that generation, but at this time it seems to be at the mercy of men without scruple or mercy. His enemies either lay in wait for him to destroy him or allowed the fanaticism of the mob against him. They were without any check from reason or principle. These persons did not have the faith. Nothing better could be expected from the godless and the unbelieving Jew.

QUESTIONS

Why say "finally brethren?"

What were the two things which they were to pray for?

What hindrances did the Word of God then have?

Name some of the hindrances now against God and His Word.

2. THE APOSTLE'S CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN THE LORD, 3:3-5

In the study of these lessons the student is constantly learning from one who has an abiding confidence in His Lord. This will help to increase in us the same confidence presented by the Apostle. No matter what may be done by wicked men who appear to be beyond the saving power of the Gospel, we are to know that all of this does not affect the faithfulness of the Lord.

Ver. 3. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and guard you from the evil one.

Man may be faithless but God is faithful. Your faithfulness is attributed to Christ. Christ is faithfully interceding in behalf of those who follow Him, and never forgets to watch over the Church that He is building. He is the creator and manifests His power over His new creation, the Church. He is able to establish us. He has equipped us with His armor, made by Himself and thus we are able to go through the ranks and battle of the enemy uninjured. Christ prayed the Father to keep all that were His through regeneration. He has the keeping power and can answer the Saviour's prayer. He does not only ask that these saints be kept, but that they may be sanctified through the Word. God is able to guard you from the evil one and deliver you from all evil. Paul promises that God will establish us for every conflict and is able in the same way to protect us.

Ver. 4. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command.

The Apostle confidently expected the Thessalonians to be obedient children of God. His confidence however was not fixed on them, as to their own efforts and endeavors and resolutions, but his confidence was fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. God's grace is able to do unto the uttermost and that gives him this confidence. The Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, is believing, hoping and doing all things in Christ. He believed that these saints would obey and do the

things commanded by the Lord. Here we have the uniting of Divine and human effort, God working and man working which is in harmony with the entire scheme of the Gospel of salvation.

Ver. 5. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ.

Our purposes and strength must come from God. He alone can give help and success. When we came into possession of our new nature, the Christ life, we permitted Him to sit upon the throne of our hearts, and submitted wholly to His direction. The only way we can know the love of God is through the mediator, Christ, who is between us and Him. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have life." Here we have, through Christ, learned something about the love of God.

"And into the patience of Christ." What more comforting to the Christian in time of conflict than to know that Christ whom we serve passed Himself through the school of persecution, and so we must pass through the same school if we are His. The Apostle prays that these Thessalonians might be directed in the patience of Christ, as this would help them to bear courageously the persecution to which they were exposed. There is great need for growth in patience. He endured the cross, despised the shame. Think of His patience as He now waits in Heaven and his people on earth wait for Him. There will a time come when His patient waiting in glory during the period that He is gathering and building the Church and the patient waiting of the Body of Christ to be received by the Head, will end. Christ will return, the Church will be received by Him and there will be no longer any patient waiting.

QUESTIONS

Why say, "But the Lord is faithful?"

What confidence have we as to His keeping power?

Why say, "We have confidence in the Lord?"

Who ought to be, and is, the director of the Head?

Why refer to the patience of Christ?

Can we imitate Christ in this?

3. DIRECTIONS FOR PROPER DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH, 3:6-9

The Lord has given us specific instructions how to be admitted into the family of God and how to grow in grace and the knowledge of the truth and here we have some additional instructions by the Holy Spirit concerning Christian behaviour and discipline.

Ver. 6. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition (instructions) which they received of us.

His command is in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. A Church that has false teachers occasionally will have among their number those who walk disorderly and whose lives do not harmonize with the teaching of the Word of God. The church in general was made up of members who walked orderly and therefore the Church is spoken of as the model Church. This strengthened the Apostle's command by having Christ the Head of the Church as his authority for what he says. That is, "Christ Himself commands you that ye withdraw yourselves." You are to keep out of the way of those who are disorderly and manifest the wrong influence. We are to withdraw our fellowship from those who will not submit to the leading power of the Holy Spirit and be obedient to the will of God. These were persons who were self-willed, idle and busy bodies. Paul had called their attention to the same trouble in his first letter to this Church (4:11-12). They were to study to be quiet and do their own business and work with their own hands. It may be that they had forgotten his former instruction and he now desires the Church to exclude such from Christian fellowship.

"The tradition." The Disciples had received considerable instruction from the Apostle in his first letter and here emphasizes the fact that after having in their possession this instruction it was not productive of any fruit through those who had so long been walking disorderly. These are not unwritten

words or uncertain sayings, handed down from one to another, but a part of the revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ given by the Holy Spirit to the Apostle to appear in his inspired letter for the use of the Church during the entire Church age. These instructions were given by the inspired Apostle and if heeded would have produced unity in the Body of Christ and power in soul-winning. This unsettled condition was brought about through teachers who perverted the Gospel of Christ.

Ver. 7. For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate (follow) us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you."

"It is not necessary really for me, Paul, to say anything about this matter. This is something that you know and yourselves are witnesses." The Apostle always emphasized the fact that he is a chosen vessel of God and for all that is said and done He has the Lord as authority. These same instructions concerning imitation are given in his first letter also (1 Thess. 1:6). There was nothing that Paul did while reasoning with the Thessalonians out of the Scriptures for three Sabbaths that had anything disorderly connected with it. These founders of the Church kept their place and discharged their duty. All of this has a very important bearing upon Paul as the writer of the letter and the Church receiving it.

Ver. 8. Neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you.

In establishing and founding this Church the preachers were obliged to support themselves while doing it. New centers of worship are hardly ever established by the community bearing the financial burdens of those who do the work. The Apostle speaks humbly because he knew that his labor in the Gospel was not in vain. The Apostle saw in Thessalonica the opportunity of gathering valuable material out of the world for Christ and for this he knew he had God's approval and it was a little matter to him as to the labor necessary to support himself.

They were incessantly employed either in preaching the Gospel, visiting from house to house or working at their calling for self-support. Here the Apostle shows what it meant in that early period of the Church to preach the Gospel, to call men out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ and do this all the time without allowing any material matters to interfere with the success of the Gospel. The people of Thessalonica were most effectually attached to the Apostle. These people were probably poor and knowing how hard he had to labor to gain for himself the necessities of life, and the same time bring them into this spiritual relation with Christ, their sympathy no doubt went out to this spiritual leader even though they could not assist him in the necessities of life. The Scripture teaches that the man who preaches the Gospel is worthy of support. They who bring from Christ the heavenly manna that feeds the heart are worthy of support from those who receive this holy and godly service. It is not because the Apostle did not believe in being supported by the Church that he founded, but he in no sense would be guilty of that by which the power of the Gospel and the success of soul winning would be weakened.

Ver. 9. Not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us.

We have the power, the right, to be maintained by those in whose behalf we labor. That "the laborer is worthy of his hire" is universally acknowledged. Those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel. The right of support is confirmed by the Apostle writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:1-18). Here he gives his converts an example of diligent working and by it removes every impediment to the progress of the Gospel. He was a minister who often waived his own rights that the Gospel might not be hindered (Acts 18:3; 2 Cor. 11:9). He was a tent maker by trade and in this way had self support. Paul expected the Thessalonians and all ministers under similar circumstances to imitate him. The Apostle gives two reasons for being an ensample to the Thes-

salonian converts: (1) that he might not be burdensome to any of them, (2) that he might give himself as a pattern for them to imitate.

QUESTIONS

To whom does Paul refer in giving authority to his command?
Do we know when to withdraw from those who walk disorderly?

Had they any instructions so they would know how to walk?

In what were they to follow the founders of this Church?

What privilege did Paul have and not use?

What does the Scripture teach concerning those who preach the Gospel?

4. EXHORTATION CONCERNING CONTINUED SERVICE, 3:10-15

The Apostle in the previous paragraph pointed to his own example. He worked night and day that he might not hinder the work of the Church. In these verses he tells the difference between those who labor night and day to establish the Church and some who are now in the Church and causing trouble through idleness.

Ver. 10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you. If any will not work, neither let him eat.

When the Apostle was with them in his ministry this was his command and by the example presented in the former verses he believed in what he taught. This is not the first time he presented this lesson of sacrifice to these people. He now, in writing this letter, knows more fully the need of this warning. Those who work may eat, and those who do not work are commanded not to eat. This is fully in harmony with what God said (Gen. 3:19). "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread." Industry is crowned with God's blessings. Idleness is the parent of many crimes and is productive of misery. Idleness is a sin. These idle members of the Church gave to the Thessalonians much trouble.

Ver. 11. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies.

Paul explains why the command was given. The Apostle had either heard from Timothy who had come to him from Thessalonica or the news was conveyed to him in some other way. There were persons in this Church who did not know enough to keep their own place. They were idle with what they should be doing and busy with that which was not theirs to do. They were working at no business, but busybodies. The word "busybody" denotes busy in useless and superfluous things, things in which they do not help themselves or others. They are occupied about trifles. "A slothful man is a scandal to any society, but most to a religious society."

Ver. 12. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

He speaks here about those who do not remain in their place and work with their own hands but are idle, only concerned with trifles. Paul again commands and exhorts these people by the Lord Jesus Christ who is over him and for whom he labors. There ought to be quietness and calmness of spirit, freedom from excitement, less disturbance, less noise, and more work. It is a great blessing, according to the Word of God, when a man can earn and eat his own bread; bread that is earned in honest industry. The Bible, all the way through emphasizes the influence those have on the community who live on the bounties and mercies of others, when able bodied to earn their own support. When Christ said, "Give to him that asketh" he did not have in mind the idle and worthless. Give to the feeble, the sick and helpless. We cannot live the Christ life and give the Christ giving unless directed by the Holy Spirit. This subject of giving needs study, thought, and prayer. We have no right to encourage idleness, neither must we allow our hearts to be hardened by the idle and worthless. The Apostle and all disciples must seek the spiritual welfare of all.

Ver. 13. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.

He asks the brethren to confirm and practice these commands from the Lord. The Christian has much to make him weary. There are disappointments, misunderstandings, ingratitude, to be overcome, and they must be overcome in the spirit and strength of Christ that we may be preserved to walk quietly and orderly. The Christian must do good, seeking no reward, save that which comes from our Father who seeth in secret. Weariness is hard to bear. It will press heavily upon us at times. We must "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12:1). This letter is to be obeyed. It has the Lord's authority back of it. The Apostle gives us to understand that the disobedient must be admonished. We have learned here that there is true dignity in honest labor. It is a great privilege to work in the station in which God has placed us. We should always choose fellowship with those who seek the society of the pious and obedient.

Ver. 14. And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed.

This refers no doubt to the man who was disobedient to Paul's preaching of the Word and to the letter that he had written before, and we find that the Church is still bearing with him. Here he gives instructions that they are to give special attention to such. They are not to continue in companionship and fellowship with him. That is, set a mark upon such. Note him for the sake of avoidance. Excommunicate him from your society. Exclude him from your fellowship meeting and by doing this he may begin to think about his misconduct and become ashamed. This is to be done that he may repent and reform. This will bring the members of the Body of Christ as a united influence to bear against his misconduct. This is very much different from what is practiced by the modern Church, aiming to go with the disobedient and have fellowship with them trying to exert an influence over them to bring them back. We are not to be on easy terms with

those whose influence and mode of life we cannot approve. The Apostle's instructions here, if obeyed, will keep us walking in the narrow way and thus we will remain unspotted from the world.

Ver. 15. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

We are to consider him not as an enemy to us but as the greatest enemy to himself. We are not to consider him as an enemy of the Church and God. In the former verse we were told how to treat him that he might best be won. Here we are warned against an excess of human authority. We are not to go to the extreme of bearing ourselves toward him as if he were a member of the unregenerate world. We are to exercise before him the duty of brotherly love, and in this way remove sin from him so as to open the way for Christian fellowship. The purpose of the Church is to discipline; not to destroy the offender, but to win him. He must be regarded as an erring brother and not as an enemy.

5. BENEDICTION AND SUBSCRIPTION, 3:16-18

(1) Prayer for Peace, 3:16

Ver. 16. Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.

The only one that can give this peace for which Paul prays is the Lord Jesus Christ who makes peace between God and the sinner. Christ says, "my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Christ is the only one that can give abiding peace. The Thessalonians had their difficulties and dangers. Christ says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." We must take upon us His yoke. We must bear His burdens, the burdens of the cross, and we shall find peace and rest for ourselves.

"Give you peace at all times in all ways," both in your conscience and among yourselves. We need this always and at all times. It is that which keeps unity among the members of the

Body of Christ. We need it in the family; we need it in the family of God. If we have Christ present, we have the very gift of peace. We shall be able through the God of peace to enjoy complete sanctification. The Apostle could desire no greater blessing for his converts. Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). Christians are the temple of God and the temples of God have the divine presence in them. The model Church, the true Church, is fully under the direction of Christ as the builder. God is constantly her keeping power and peace.

(2) Paul's Salutation and Autograph, 3:17-18

Paul writes the last word of this letter and signs his name to the letter with his own hand.

Ver. 17. The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

The Apostles custom was to dictate his letters. The letters were dictated to an amanuensis, but he wrote the conclusion himself. The false teachers used some information gathered from letters purporting to have been written by Paul. This no doubt is the reason for the closing words written by himself and the signature by his own hand. Notice the salutation referred to in other Epistles (Rom. 16:22; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; Philem. 1:19).

"Which is the token." That is, the mark of authority or authenticity. This was very necessary so that the Church might have confidence in the letter and be strengthened through the letter in their faith in God. These epistles were sacred writings. They had the stamp of divine authority and the apostle marks this importance and authority by his closing words. He signs this last letter he sends to his converts. He greets them with the love and confidence a father would have for his children. The Apostle has fully unburdened his mind and heart concerning his duty to the Thessalonian converts. In the writing of this letter by the person to whom he gave this instruction he realizes that he is constantly under the guiding

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power of the Holy Spirit. Paul is writing not by his own authority but through the Holy Spirit as his superior and guide, receiving the words contained in this letter from the All Truth that Christ had promised for the Church. These words are from the Builder of the Church who Himself is the All Truth and they have the same weight and authority as though they were written and spoken by the Lord Himself. The Apostle took the roll of parchment in his own hands and in his own hand writing put down these last words, as recorded in the last three verses. All the members of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ into whose hands this letter comes must receive it as a letter inspired to lead all of us into that spirit of expectation and patience in hoping and waiting for the return of the Lord for His redeemed.

Ver. 18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

This does not only include in the benediction the saints at Thessalonica but all who read and study the inspired and sacred word contained in this letter. Paul longs for the restoration of those who were living disorderly and for the continual progress and sanctification of the whole Church. The power of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, can change the disorder in any Church. The same grace can comfort the faithful. The Apostle Paul signs his epistle with a prayer for grace, "By grace ye are saved." We must be willing to refer all that we are and hope to be to the grace of God. We trust only in that grace.

QUESTIONS

Who is our peace?

What was the condition before Christ came between man and God?

What are we to be according to Matt. 5:9?

Who is the author of peace and how can we get peace?

What may we not do if the Lord is always with us?

Why did Paul write these last words, and why put his signature to his document?

Give meaning of "grace" in verse 18.

What will grace do for those who are not strong in Christ?

Give the meaning of the last word of the Epistle.

APPENDIX

The Church's Motive for Service

(The following material is selected from the book, "Ten Sermons on the Second Advent," by the Rev. E. W. Bullinger, D. D. Published by E. & J. B. Young & Co., New York.)

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," (Is. 11:9).

"As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be," (Matt. 24:37).

It is a fundamental article of the Christian Faith, that Jesus who was conceived of a Virgin, born in Bethlehem, Suffered and died for the sins of His people, Rose again from the dead, and Ascended up into Heaven, shall in due time come again with power and great glory. Whatever views individuals may hold concerning this event, all creeds, and confessions of faith, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Western, and Oriental, bear their witness to it.

All are agreed that the Scriptures reveal a time of universal blessedness as being in store for this work, and the world itself looks forward to "a good time coming." All are agreed that it will be characterized by a universal knowledge of Divine Truth; universal subjection to Divine Rule; universal peace amongst all nations, and blessing for "all Israel." This happy period of the world is commonly spoken of by the word "millennium."

Now while all Christians are agreed as to these two great facts, viz.:—(1) That Christ is coming, and (2) That this time of universal blessedness is also coming, yet all are not agreed as to the relation of these two events, the one to the other. The simple question is this, which of these two events will take place first.

The question is not whether Christ is coming: and it is not whether a millennium of peace is coming, but which of these events precedes the other.

All other questions in connection with the Second Advent are subordinate to this, because if Christ is to come first, then there can be no hope of improvement in, or blessing for the world till Christ comes; and it is both foolish and vain to look and labor for it. And, if the millennium is to come first, then it is equally vain to be constantly "looking for that blessed hope," and waiting and watching for Christ.

The early Christians looked for Christ. They "waited for God's Son from Heaven." They looked for a person, and not for a millennium without Him. It has been reserved for a later generation to place the millennium before the Church, as its hope.

Pre-millennialists believe that the world will grow worse and worse; post-millennialists believe that it will grow better and better. Between these two views there is no room for compromise, there can be no concession. It is entirely, and only, and wholly, a question of Revelation. Let us beware of speaking of what God is or is not likely to do. For it is written, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8). The Pre-millennial Advent of Christ is the truth of the Bible.

Let us look at a few Scriptures of the Prophets and "believe all."

I. Isa. 11:9. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." But note how this scene of blessedness is ushered in with judgment and Christ's coming, in Ver. 4, "With Righteousness shall he JUDGE the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked" (i. e. at the coming of Christ, see 2 Thess. 2:8).

II. Isa. 2:2, 3. "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains . . . and all nations shall flow unto it, and many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the

God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths, etc." Now note the context in which this prophecy occurs. The words immediately preceding, declare that it is "concerning Judah and Jerusalem," and the words that immediately follow tell us that this shall be when "He shall JUDGE among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Thus we learn that this time of universal peace is ushered in by judgment, and not by the increase of Gospel light.

III. Isa. 25:6, 7. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined; and He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations, etc." From the preceding context we learn (24:23) that "this mountain" is Mount Zion on which "the Lord of Hosts shall reign . . . before His ancients gloriously," and from the context immediately succeeding (Ver. 9, 10, 12) "It shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under Him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill . . . and the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down; lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust." So that the spreading of the feast (which is no feast of gospel fat things), and this removing of the vail of error, will not take place till Christ, the One "waited for," shall come.

IV. Is. 35:1, 2, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose . . . They shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God." But notice how this time of blessing and fruitfulness is introduced in Ver. 4, "Say

to them that are of a fearful heart be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you." "Then (not before) the eyes of the blind shall be opened," etc., and all the scenes of millennial glory be revealed.

V. Is. 40: 5, "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." But read on, and note Ver. 10, "Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him, behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him."

VI. Is. 66: 10, "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her . . . 12, For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. 13, As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you, etc. Ver. 14, And when ye see this your heart shall rejoice," etc. But now note the next verse 15, "For behold the Lord will come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire. 16, For by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many." This does not look like gradual improvement and progress, resulting and ending in blessing and peace!

VII. Ps. 2:8, is another verse which one hears constantly quoted on the platforms of missionary meetings, "Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." But we never hear the next words of Ver. 9 quoted in connection with Ver. 8, yet there they stand, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel!" But if the heathen are to be given to Christ by the preaching of the gospel as the result of missionary effort, why are these converted nations to be broken and dashed in pieces in judgment. Even if it be said that the language is figurative "a rod

of iron" can surely be no figure of a message of peace; nor can a "dashing in pieces" be a figure of the Gospel of Grace!

VIII. Zech. 12:10, "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications." When? The verse before tells us "in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem," and the same verse (10) tells us that it shall be, when "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Not therefore by the spread of gospel light but by the seeing of the pierced-one coming in judgment.

IX. Zech. 14:9, "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord and His name one." What day? Verse 1 tells us "The day of the Lord," when (Ver. 3) "the Lord shall go forth and fight . . . and His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." And so the succeeding context goes on to speak (Ver. 12) of "the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem," etc. This is what shall usher in that reign of peace.

Turn now to Dan. 7, and there you will find three verses often wrested from their context.

X. Dan. 7:14, "And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Is this universal dominion given to Christ in connection with the spread of the Gospel? No, but at His coming. Look at the preceding verse (13) "I saw in the night visions and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." THEN "there was given HIM," (not peace and righteousness but) "Dominion and glory . . . that all nations . . . should serve Him."

XI. Dan. 7:22, "The time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." When did the time come? When "the ancient of days came?" And does He come at the conclusion of a millennium of peace? No! The previous verse says "I beheld,

and the same horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them UNTIL the ancient of days came and (then, not till then) judgment was given to the saints of the Most High and the time came that the saints possessed the Kingdom." It is clear therefore that Christ must come before there can be an end of war, and the Kingdom be possessed.

XII. Dan. 7:27, "And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High." When? The verses immediately preceding (25, 26) tell us of a power that "shall speak great words against the most High and shall wear out the Saints of the most High . . . But the judgment shall sit and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Then follows the statement of Ver 27.

It is in fact impossible to produce a Scripture which speaks of Millennial blessing, where the immediate context does not connect it with preceding judgment, or with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In every instance the bright picture of rest and glory for "the Jew, the Gentile and the Church of God," rests on the dark background of tribulation and judgment.

The New Testament is full of predictions of increasing and abounding evil; and side by side with these are "exceeding great and precious promises" for the poor and afflicted the suffering and the sorrowful, the hated and persecuted; and this during the continuance of the present dispensation.

Time will not permit us to go through all the Scriptures which refer to this subject. We can only remind you of certain great classes of passages:

I. The class which speaks directly of the object of the Gospel "to take out of the nations a people for His name" (Acts 15:14-17, Matt. 24:14, John 1:17), etc.

II. The class that describes the suffering condition of the Church as "a little flock," and utterly precludes all idea of her increase and absorption of a converted world: Matt. 5:10, 11,

44; 7:13-22; 9:15; Luke 18:8, John 15:18-21; 16:33; 17:14-16; Acts 14:22; 20:29, 30; Rom. 8:17-24; Phil. 3:18-21; 1 Thess. 5:1-8; 2 Tim. 2:12, Heb. 10:30-37; 1 Pet. 4:12-18.

III. The class which speaks of the condition of the world, immediately before our Lord's return, comparing those days to the days before the flood: Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-30; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; 2 Pet. 2 and 3:3; Jude 17, 18, etc.

IV. Another class which consists of warnings for the saints in view of increasing iniquity. "This know" (2 Tim. 3).

"I charge Thee" (2 Tim. 4:1).

"The Spirit speaketh expressly" (1 Tim. 4:1)

"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Pet. 3:1).

II.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." 1 John 3:2, 3.

Our text lays down this great principle, that the coming of Christ in glory is not a mere doctrine to be preached; not a mere theory to be held; not a mere dogma to be believed, but it is the mighty motive for all true Christian service. It is a hope that is bound up inseparably with all doctrines, all ordinances, all precepts, and all practice.

For example, we desire to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called;" we desire to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;" to be "fruitful in every good work;" diligent in all service. Then the question is, How shall we accomplish this? "What must we do" in order to attain this desired end?

Man, of course (even the spiritual man), is ready with his various rules for holy living! for he is by nature a Pharisee, and is always ready "to do" something. Even when he con-

fesses that he has been "justified by grace" he would like to be sanctified by works! He forgets that God has "made Him (Jesus) to be unto us, justification and sanctification," and that we are not justified in Christ by grace without an effort, and then left to be sanctified in ourselves by our own effort.

Man says that faith is that which will produce holiness of living; God says it is hope. Man says it is faith in Christ's power to keep me if I can only keep my own faith! but God says it is "hope" in Christ's coming for me, that will purify me, and this blessed hope He has given me as my permanent possession.

Note now, some of the practical uses which the Holy Spirit makes of this blessed hope in the Word of God.

1. It is a powerful motive with the sinner to make him turn from his evil ways. The command to repent stands frequently connected with the Lord's coming (Matt. 3:2, Acts 3:19, 20, 17:30, 31). All the passages which speak of the nearness of the day of the Lord, its suddenness, its terrors for the ungodly; all appeal powerfully to the neglecter of the great salvation. If this doctrine be really true, it is evident that it is not merely a question of the uncertainty of life (which is the point of most pulpit appeals), but of the certainty of Christ's coming. "When once the Master of the House hath risen up and shut to the door," etc. All depends on this:—the movement of Christ! while He is seated at God's right hand the door of mercy is open, when once He is risen up, it will be shut! And yet preachers neglect this powerful motive, and introduce another which the Scriptures do not urge.

2. Again, why is a man not profited if he "gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26). Why? Because the next verse tells us "FOR the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels and then shall He reward every man according to his works." That is why. If a man could gain the whole world, it would be useless for the Lord is coming to judge it.

3. Why is the case of mere professors, who say "Lord,

Lord," so hopeless? (Matt. 7:21). Because the next verse tells us, that "in that day . . . then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from Me." That is why!

4. How does Christ warn us not to be ashamed of Him and of His words now (Mark 8:38). By reminding us in the next verse, that "of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

5. What is the true comfort for those who are "troubled" at Christ's absence? Not, you shall die and come to me, but "I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:1-3).

6. What is true comfort in bereavement? "Comfort one another with these words." What words? Words which tell of the reunion of those who have fallen asleep with those who are alive and remain, when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven to receive both into His presence. "So (lit., thus, in this manner) shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The Great Comforter Himself likewise connected true comfort with Resurrection. "Thy brother shall rise again" (John 11:23). But man has improved on that; and has quite a different mode of comforting bereaved ones now. He quite dispenses with the hope of the Advent and Resurrection, and bids all mourners to comfort themselves with a kind of Christian Spiritualism, which quiets everyone, good and bad alike, with the delusion of all going to heaven when they die!

7. The hope of a groaning creation is bound up with the manifestation of the saints with Christ in glory. "For the earnest expectation of the creature (creation R. V.) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God . . . Because the creature (creation, R. V.) itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty (R. V. into the liberty of the glory) of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-23).

8. With what motive are we urged not to judge one another now, and not to be moved when others judge us? (1 Cor.

4:3, 4). Because the next verse says, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

9. If we are exhorted to draw near with faith and take the bread and wine in memory of our Lord's death at His first advent, we cannot, or ought not to do it, without connecting it with His second advent (1 Cor. 11:26), "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

10. Is love for the person of Christ set before us as the greatest and most important of all things? It is so in consideration of the fact that He is coming again. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema (accursed), Maran-atha (our Lord cometh) (1 Cor. 16:22). It is the fact of the Lord's coming which puts everything in its right place. The Apostle had much to complain of in this first epistle to the Corinthians. In chapter 1, divisions; 4, false judgments; 5, uncleanness; 6, brother going to law with brother; 10, 11, errors in ritual; 15:35, errors of doctrine; but when he comes to the last verse in that epistle; when it is a question of Maran-atha; when things are weighed in the light of that all-pervading fact of the Lord's coming, then he does not say, if any man be not moral or orthodox, etc., but "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ." As much as to say—Nothing but love for Christ will stand us in any stead when "Our Lord cometh." A man may be perfectly moral, orthodox, and correct in ritual, and yet have no love for Christ! This fact of the Master's coming puts all these things in their proper place, and tells us that the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and only those who have His love shed abroad in their hearts shall be exalted with Him.

11. Are we exhorted (Eph. 4:30) to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God?" it is added, "whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

12. Are we exhorted to "be sober?" the exhortation is based on the same motive (1 Thess. 5:2-6).

13. Are we exhorted to forbearance and gentleness? (for this is the meaning of the word in Phil. 4:5), "Let your moderation be known unto all men?" The reason for it is "The Lord is at hand," and He therefore will put all right that is now so wrong. And if His coming be so near, such things are not worth contending for.

14. Have we "need of patience that after we have done the will of God we may receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36)? The motive for it is found in the next verse: "For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry."

And again, "Be patient therefore brethren unto the coming of the Lord" (Jas. 5:7).

15. Are we exhorted to mortify the flesh? This is still the mighty motive, "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," etc. (Col. 3:4, 5).

16. Does the apostle pray that his Philippian converts "may be sincere and without offence?" it is with reference to and "till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:9, 10).

17. If St. John exhorts his "little children" to "abide in Him," the exhortation is pointed with this motive "that when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

18. If our faith be tried, it is that it "might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

19. We are bidden to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Why? "that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13).

20. If we are exhorted to "watch unto prayer," it is because "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7).

Here are twenty examples, and a hundred might easily be given. But these will be sufficient to show that the doctrine is

no mere visionary enthusiasm, or fanaticism; but is one of the most practical of all the truths revealed in the Word of God.

There is nothing more urgently and frequently laid to its charge, than that this doctrine tends to paralyze missionary effort. But "the tree is known by its fruit," and so far from this being the case, we find one among the Primitive Churches which is indeed a Model Church, the church of Thessalonica. It received abundant and almost unqualified praise; and it was emphatically ■ Missionary Church. "Ye were ensamples (the apostle writes 1 Thess. 1:7, 8) to all that believe, in Macedonia and Achaia, for from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad." And this Church was all this because of the Christian character of its members. That character was formed on "all truth," and hence it was not deformed. It was perfect in its threefold completeness. (1) They had "TURNED to God from idols, (2) to SERVE the living and true God, and (3) to WAIT for God's Son from Heaven" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). Yes. They waited for God's Son from Heaven. Not for Death, or Providence, or Titus, or the World's conversion, or the Restoration of the Jews, or for the reconstruction of the Roman Earth, but for God's Son from Heaven. This one subject occupies one quarter of these two Epistles to the Thessalonians. One verse in four! a dozen passages in four or five pages which speak of the coming of God's Son from Heaven! Every chapter contains a reference to it (1 Thess. 1:10; 2:17-20; 3:11-13; 4:13-18; 5:1-6, 23; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 2:1-12; 3:5). No wonder it was a Missionary Church! No wonder it was a Model Church!

The doctrine of the Lord's speedy coming puts all work in its right place. It tells us that the great object of the preaching of the gospel is not the conversion of the world, which would put off that coming to an indefinite day, or for a thousand years at least. The professing church has told the world that its mission is to convert it, but she deceives the world, and the world can turn round and taunt her with her failure while it

can point to the awful fact that it is fast converting the professing church to its own worldliness.

It all depends, however, on what the gospel was sent and meant to do. If the gospel was meant to convert the world, it will be a failure if this is not done. But if the gospel was meant "to take out . . . a people for His name," then it is not a failure, for this is being done. If it was sent that God might in mercy "save some," then it is not a failure. If it was given that a company which no man can number might be saved out of every people and kindred and nation, then it is no failure, for that is being done. If it was sent that it might be "preached for a witness unto all nations," then it is not a failure for this is being done. And these are the objects of the gospel, and therefore of Missionary labor "according to the Scriptures."

All the Prophets and Apostles agree in testifying that the world will never know blessing without the Blessor; will never know peace till "the Prince of Peace" shall come; and will never know Righteousness until "He comes whose right it is;" until "a King shall reign in Righteousness."

The Prophets and Apostles of old were animated by no such false hopes. One said "Lord, who hath believed our report" (John 12:38; Rom. 10:16). Another said "The love of Christ constraineth us" (not the hope of success). They strove as "Stewards" to be faithful (1 Cor. 4:1-3), and looked for the commendation "Well done good and faithful servant"—not good and successful. Yes, it is "the love of Christ," the love of a crucified, risen, ascended, and returning Saviour which alone will enable any one to obey the last great command "GO! preach the gospel to every creature." There our commission begins and ends. We have nothing to do with results. As stewards we must be found faithful and no apparent failure can dishearten us if we only bear in mind that "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world;" and that His word cannot return to Him void. It must prosper in the thing whereunto He hath sent it; and that His purpose and counsel must stand forever.

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